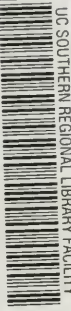


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Thomas Larter







BARNABY RUDGE









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HOW THE ACCOMPLISHED GENTLEMAN SPENT THE EVENING IN THE MIDST OF A DAZZLING AND BRILLIANT CIRCLE.—P. 93



# BARNABY RUDGE

*A TALE OF THE RIOTS OF 'EIGHTY'*

BY

CHARLES DICKENS



*WITH FORTY-SIX ILLUSTRATIONS BY F. BARNARD*

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## PREFACE.

**T**HE late Mr. Waterton having, some time ago, expressed his opinion that ravens are gradually becoming extinct in England, I offered the few following words about my experience of these birds.

The raven in this story is a compound of two great originals, of whom I was, at different times, the proud possessor. The first was in the bloom of his youth, when he was discovered in a modest retirement in London by a friend of mine, and given to me. He had from the first, as Sir Hugh Evans says of Anne Page, "good gifts," which he improved by study and attention in a most exemplary manner. He slept in a stable—generally on horseback—and so terrified a Newfoundland dog by his preternatural sagacity, that he has been known, by the mere superiority of his genius, to walk off unmolested with the dog's dinner from before his face. He was rapidly rising in acquirements and virtues, when, in an evil hour, his stable was newly painted. He observed the workmen closely, saw that they were careful of the paint, and immediately burned to possess it. On their going to dinner, he ate up all they had left behind, consisting of a pound or two of white-lead; and this youthful indiscretion terminated in death.

While I was yet inconsolable for his loss, another friend of mine in Yorkshire discovered an older and more gifted raven at a village public-house, which he prevailed upon the landlord to part with for a consideration, and sent up to me. The first act of this Sage was, to administer to the effects of his predecessor by disinterring all the cheese and halfpence he had buried in the garden—a work of immense labour and research, to which he devoted all the energies of his mind. When he had achieved his task, he applied himself to the acquisition of stable language, in which he soon became such an adept, that he would perch outside my window, and drive imaginary horses with great skill, all day. Perhaps even I never saw him at his best, for his former master sent his duty with him, "and if I wished the bird to come out very strong, would I be so good as to show him a drunken man?"—which I never did, having (unfortunately) none but sober people at hand. But I could hardly have respected him more, whatever the stimulating influences of this sight might have been. He had not the least respect, I am sorry to say, for me



in return, or for anybody but the cook ; to whom he was attached—but only, I fear, as a Policeman might have been. Once, I met him unexpectedly, about half a mile from my house, walking down the middle of a public street, attended by a pretty large crowd, and spontaneously exhibiting the whole of his accomplishments. His gravity under those trying circumstances I can never forget, nor the extraordinary gallantry with which, refusing to be brought home, he defended himself behind a pump until overpowered by numbers. It may have been that he was too bright a genius to live long, or it may have been that he took some pernicious substance into his bill, and thence into his maw—which is not improbable, seeing that he new-pointed the greater part of the garden wall by digging out the mortar, broke countless squares of glass by scraping away the putty all round the frames, and tore up and swallowed, in splinters, the greater part of a wooden staircase of six steps and a landing—but after some three years he too was taken ill, and died before the kitchen fire. He kept his eye to the last upon the meat as it roasted, and suddenly turned over on his back with a sepulchral cry of “Cuckoo !” Since then I have been ravenless.

No account of the Gordon Riots having been to my knowledge introduced into any Work of Fiction, and the subject presenting very extraordinary and remarkable features, I was led to project this Tale.

It is unnecessary to say, that those shameful tumults, while they reflect indelible disgrace upon the time in which they occurred, and all who had act or part in them, teach a good lesson. That what we falsely call a religious cry is easily raised by men who have no religion, and who in their daily practice set at nought the commonest principles of right and wrong ; that it is begotten of intolerance and persecution ; that it is senseless, besotted, inveterate, and unmerciful ; all History teaches us. But perhaps we do not know it in our hearts too well to profit by even so humble an example as the “No Popery” Riots of Seventeen Hundred and Eighty.

However imperfectly those disturbances are set forth in the following pages, they are impartially painted by one who has no sympathy with the Romish Church, though he acknowledges, as most men do, some esteemed friends among the followers of its creed.

In the description of the principal outrages, reference has been had to the best authorities of that time, such as they are ; the account given in this Tale, of all the main features of the Riots, is substantially correct.

Mr. Dennis's allusions to the flourishing condition of his trade in those days have their foundation in Truth, and not in the Author's fancy. Any file of old Newspapers, or odd volume of the Annual Register, will prove this with terrible ease.

Even the case of Mary Jones, dwelt upon with so much pleasure by the same character, is no effort of invention. The facts were stated, exactly as they are stated here, in the House of Commons. Whether they afforded as much entertainment to the merry gentlemen assembled

there, as some other most affecting circumstances of a similar nature mentioned by Sir Samuel Romilly, is not recorded.

That the case of Mary Jones may speak the more emphatically for itself, I subjoin it, as related by SIR WILLIAM MEREDITH in a speech in Parliament, "on Frequent Executions," made in 1777:—

"Under this act," the Shop-lifting Act, "one Mary Jones was executed, whose case I shall just mention; it was at the time when press warrants were issued, on the alarm about Falkland Islands. The woman's husband was pressed, their goods seized for some debts of his, and she, with two small children, turned into the streets a begging. It is a circumstance not to be forgotten, that she was very young (under nineteen), and most remarkably handsome. She went to a linendraper's shop, took some coarse linen off the counter, and slipped it under her cloak; the shopman saw her, and she laid it down: for this she was hanged. Her defence was (I have the trial in my pocket), 'that she had lived in credit, and wanted for nothing, till a press-gang came and stole her husband from her; but since then, she had no bed to lie on; nothing to give her children to eat; and they were almost naked; and perhaps she might have done something wrong, for she hardly knew what she did.' The parish officers testified the truth of this story; but it seems there had been a good deal of shop-lifting about Ludgate; an example was thought necessary; and this woman was hanged for the comfort and satisfaction of shop-keepers in Ludgate Street. When brought to receive sentence, she behaved in such a frantic manner as proved her mind to be in a distracted and desponding state; and the child was suckling at her breast when she set out for Tyburn."





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## BARNABY RUDGE.

### CHAPTER I.

**I**N the year 1775 there stood upon the borders of Epping Forest, at a distance of about twelve miles from London—measuring from the Standard in Cornhill, or rather from the spot on or near to which the Standard used to be in days of yore—a house of public entertainment called the Maypole; which fact was demonstrated to all such travellers as could neither read nor write (and sixty-six years ago a vast number both of travellers and stay-at-homes were in this condition) by the emblem reared on the roadside over against

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the house, which, if not of those goodly proportions that Maypoles were wont to present in olden times, was a fair young ash, thirty feet in height, and straight as any arrow that ever English yeoman drew.

The Maypole—by which term from henceforth is meant the house, and not its sign—the Maypole was an old building, with more gable-ends than a lazy man would care to count on a sunny day; huge zigzag chimneys, out of which it seemed as though even smoke could not choose but come in more than naturally fantastic shapes, imparted to it in its tortuous progress; and vast stables, gloomy, ruinous, and empty. The place was said to have been built in the days of King



Henry the Eighth; and there was a legend, not only that Queen Elizabeth had slept there one night while upon a hunting excursion, to wit, in a certain oak-panelled room with a deep bay-window, but that next morning, while standing on a mounting block before the door with one foot in the stirrup, the virgin monarch had then and there boxed and cuffed an unlucky page for some neglect of duty. The matter-of-fact and doubtful folks, of whom there were a few among the Maypole customers, as unluckily there always are in every little community, were inclined to look upon this tradition as rather apocryphal; but, whenever the landlord of that ancient hostelry appealed to the mounting block itself as evidence, and triumphantly pointed out that there it stood in the same place to that very day, the doubters never failed to be put down by a large majority, and all true believers exulted as in a victory.

Whether these, and many other stories of the like nature, were true or untrue, the Maypole was really an old house, a very old house, perhaps as old as it claimed to be, and perhaps older, which will sometimes happen with houses of an uncertain, as with ladies of a certain, age. Its windows were old diamond-pane lattices, its floors were sunken and uneven, its ceilings blackened by the hand of time and heavy with massive beams. Over the doorway was an ancient porch, quaintly and grotesquely carved; and here on summer evenings the more favoured customers smoked and drank—ay, and sang many a good song too, sometimes—reposing on two grim-looking high-backed settles, which, like the twin dragons of some fairy tale, guarded the entrance to the mansion.

In the chimneys of the disused rooms swallows had built their nests for many a long year, and from earliest spring to latest autumn whole colonies of sparrows chirped and twittered in the eaves. There were more pigeons about the dreary stable-yard and out-buildings than anybody but the landlord could reckon up. The wheeling and circling flight of runts, fantails, tumblers, and pouters were perhaps not quite consistent with the grave and sober character of the building, but the monotonous cooing, which never ceased to be raised by some among them all day long, suited it exactly, and seemed to lull it to rest. With its overhanging stories, drowsy little panes of glass, and front bulging out and projecting over the pathway, the old house looked as if it were nodding in its sleep. Indeed, it needed no very great stretch of fancy to detect in it other resemblances to humanity. The bricks of which it was built had originally

been a deep dark red, but had grown yellow and discoloured like an old man's skin; the sturdy timbers had decayed like teeth; and here and there the ivy, like a warm garment to comfort it in its age, wrapped its green leaves closely round the time-worn walls.

It was a hale and hearty age, though, still: and in the summer or autumn evenings, when the glow of the setting sun fell upon the oak and chestnut trees of the adjacent forest, the old house, partaking of its lustre, seemed their fit companion, and to have many good years of life in him yet.

The evening with which we have to do was neither a summer nor an autumn one, but the twilight of a day in March, when the wind howled dismally among the bare branches of the trees, and rumbling in the wide chimneys and driving the rain against the windows of the Maypole Inn, gave such of its frequenters as chanced to be there at the moment an undeniable reason for prolonging their stay, and caused the landlord to prophesy that the night would certainly clear at eleven o'clock precisely,—which, by a remarkable coincidence, was the hour at which he always closed his house.

The name of him upon whom the spirit of prophecy thus descended was John Willet, a burly, large-headed man with a fat face, which betokened profound obstinacy and slowness of apprehension, combined with a very strong reliance upon his own merits. It was John Willet's ordinary boast, in his more placid moods, that if he were slow he was sure; which assertion could, in one sense at least, be by no means gainsaid, seeing that he was in everything unquestionably the reverse of fast, and withal one of the most dogged and positive fellows in existence—always sure that what he thought or said or did was right, and holding it as a thing quite settled and ordained by the laws of nature and Providence, that anybody who said or did or thought otherwise must be inevitably and of necessity wrong.

Mr. Willet walked slowly up to the window, flattened his fat nose against the cold glass, and, shading his eyes that his sight might not be affected by the ruddy glow of the fire, looked abroad. Then he walked slowly back to his old seat in the chimney-corner, and, composing himself in it with a slight shiver, such as a man might give way to, and so acquire an additional relish for the warm blaze, said, looking round upon his guests:

"It'll clear at eleven o'clock. No sooner and no later. Not before and not arterwards."

"How do you make out that?" said a little

man in the opposite corner. "The moon is past the full, and she rises at nine."

John looked sedately and solemnly at his questioner until he had brought his mind to bear upon the whole of his observation, and then made answer, in a tone which seemed to imply that the moon was peculiarly his business and nobody else's :

"Never you mind about the moon. Don't you trouble yourself about her. You let the moon alone, and I'll let you alone."

"No offence I hope?" said the little man.

Again John waited leisurely until the observation had thoroughly penetrated to his brain, and then replying, "No offence *as yet*," applied a light to his pipe and smoked in placid silence ; now and then casting a sidelong look at a man wrapped in a loose riding coat with huge cuffs ornamented with tarnished silver lace and large metal buttons, who sat apart from the regular frequenters of the house, and wearing a hat flapped over his face, which was still further shaded by the hand on which his forehead rested, looked unsociable enough.

There was another guest, who sat, booted and spurred, at some distance from the fire also, and whose thoughts—to judge from his folded arms and knitted brows, and from the untasted liquor before him—were occupied with other matters than the topics under discussion or the persons who discussed them. This was a young man of about eight-and-twenty, rather above the middle height, and though of a somewhat slight figure, gracefully and strongly made. He wore his own dark hair, and was accoutred in a riding dress, which, together with his large boots (resembling in shape and fashion those worn by our Life Guardsmen at the present day), showed indisputable traces of the bad condition of the roads. But travel-stained though he was, he was well and even richly attired, and, without being overdressed, looked a gallant gentleman.

Lying upon the table beside him, as he had carelessly thrown them down, were a heavy riding whip and a slouched hat, the latter worn, no doubt, as being best suited to the inclemency of the weather. There, too, were a pair of pistols in a holster case, and a short riding cloak. Little of his face was visible, except the long dark lashes which concealed his downcast eyes, but an air of careless ease and natural gracefulness of demeanour pervaded the figure, and seemed to comprehend even these slight accessories, which were all handsome, and in good keeping.

Towards this young gentleman the eyes of

Mr. Willet wandered but once, and then as if in mute inquiry whether he had observed his silent neighbour. It was plain that John and the young gentleman had often met before. Finding that his look was not returned, or indeed observed by the person to whom it was addressed, John gradually concentrated the whole power of his eyes into one focus, and brought it to bear upon the man in the flapped hat, at whom he came to stare in course of time with an intensity so remarkable, that it affected his fireside cronies, who all, as with one accord, took their pipes from their lips, and stared with open mouths at the stranger likewise.

The sturdy landlord had a large pair of dull fish-like eyes, and the little man who had hazarded the remark about the moon (and who was the parish clerk and bell-ringer of Chigwell ; a village hard by), had little round black shiny eyes like beads ; moreover, this little man wore at the knees of his rusty black breeches, and on his rusty black coat, and all down his long flapped waistcoat, little queer buttons like nothing except his eyes ; but so like them, that as they twinkled and glistened in the light of the fire, which shone too in his bright shoe-buckles, he seemed all eyes from head to foot, and to be gazing with every one of them at the unknown customer. No wonder that a man should grow restless under such an inspection as this, to say nothing of the eyes belonging to short Tom Cobb the general chandler and post-office keeper, and long Phil Parkes the ranger, both of whom, infected by the example of their companions, regarded him of the flapped hat no less attentively.

The stranger became restless ; perhaps from being exposed to this raking fire of eyes, perhaps from the nature of his previous meditations—most probably from the latter cause, for, as he changed his position and looked hastily round, he started to find himself the object of such keen regard, and darted an angry and suspicious glance at the fireside group. It had the effect of immediately diverting all eyes to the chimney, except those of John Willet, who, finding himself, as it were, caught in the fact, and not being (as has been already observed) of a very ready nature, remained staring at his guest in a particularly awkward and disconcerted manner.

"Well?" said the stranger.

Well. There was not much in well. It was not a long speech. "I thought you gave an order," said the landlord, after a pause of two or three minutes for consideration.

The stranger took off his hat, and disclosed



the hard features of a man of sixty or thereabouts, much weather-beaten and worn by time, and the naturally harsh expression of which was not improved by a dark handkerchief which was bound tightly round his head, and, while it served the purpose of a wig, shaded his forehead, and almost hid his eyebrows. If it were intended to conceal or divert attention from a deep gash, now healed into an ugly seam, which when it was first inflicted must have laid bare his cheek-bone, the object was but indifferently attained, for it could scarcely fail to be noted at a glance. His complexion was of a cadaverous hue, and he had a grizzly jagged beard of some three weeks' date. Such was the figure (very meanly and poorly clad) that now rose from the seat, and stalking across the room, sat down in a corner of the chimney, which the politeness or fears of the little clerk very readily assigned to him.

"A highwayman!" whispered Tom Cobb to Parkes the ranger.

"Do you suppose highwaymen don't dress handsomer than that?" replied Parkes. "It's a better business than you think for, Tom, and highwaymen don't need or use to be shabby, take my word for it."

Meanwhile, the subject of their speculations had done due honour to the house by calling for some drink, which was promptly supplied by the landlord's son, Joe, a broad-shouldered strapping young fellow of twenty, whom it pleased his father still to consider a little boy, and to treat accordingly. Stretching out his hands to warm them by the blazing fire, the man turned his head towards the company, and after running his eye sharply over them, said in a voice well suited to his appearance:

"What house is that which stands a mile or so from here?"

"Public-house?" said the landlord, with his usual deliberation.

"Public-house, father!" exclaimed Joe. "Where's the public-house within a mile or so of the Maypole? He means the great house—the Warren—naturally and of course. The old red-brick house, sir, that stands in its own grounds——"

"Ay," said the stranger.

"And that fifteen or twenty years ago stood in a park five times as broad, which, with other and richer property, has bit by bit changed hands and dwindled away—more's the pity!" pursued the young man.

"Maybe," was the reply. "But my question related to the owner. What it has been I don't

care to know, and what it is I can see for myself."

The heir-apparent to the Maypole pressed his finger on his lips, and glancing at the young gentleman already noticed, who had changed his attitude when the house was first mentioned, replied in a lower tone,

"The owner's name is Haredale, Mr. Geoffrey Haredale, and"—again he glanced in the same direction as before—"and a worthy gentleman too—hem!"

Paying as little regard to this admonitory cough as to the significant gesture that had preceded it, the stranger pursued his questioning.

"I turned out of my way coming here, and took the footpath that crosses the grounds. Who was the young lady that I saw entering a carriage? His daughter?"

"Why, how should I know, honest man?" replied Joe, contriving, in the course of some arrangements about the hearth, to advance close to his questioner and pluck him by the sleeve. "I didn't see the young lady you know. Whew! There's the wind again—and rain. Well, it is a night!"

"Rough weather indeed!" observed the strange man.

"You're used to it?" said Joe, catching at anything which seemed to promise a diversion of the subject.

"Pretty well," returned the other. "About the young lady—has Mr. Haredale a daughter?"

"No, no," said the young fellow fretfully, "he's a single gentleman—he's—be quiet, can't you, man? Don't you see this talk is not relished yonder?"

Regardless of this whispered remonstrance, and affecting not to hear it, his tormentor provokingly continued:

"Single men have had daughters before now. Perhaps she may be his daughter, though he is not married."

"What do you mean?" said Joe, adding in an under-tone, as he approached him again, "You'll come in for it presently, I know you will!"

"I mean no harm"—returned the traveller boldly, "and have said none that I know of. I ask a few questions—as any stranger may, and not unnaturally—about the inmates of a remarkable house in a neighbourhood which is new to me, and you are as aghast and disturbed as if I were talking treason against King George. Perhaps you can tell me why, sir, for (as I say) I am a stranger, and this is Greek to me?"

The latter observation was addressed to the



obvious cause of Joe Willet's discomposure, who had risen and was adjusting his riding cloak preparatory to sallying abroad. Briefly replying that he could give him no information, the young man beckoned to Joe, and handing him a piece of money in payment of his reckoning, hurried out, attended by young Willet himself, who, taking up a candle, followed to light him to the house-door.

While Joe was absent on this errand, the elder Willet and his three companions continued to smoke with profound gravity, and in a deep silence, each having his eyes fixed on a huge copper boiler that was suspended over the fire. After some time John Willet slowly shook his head, and thereupon his friends slowly shook theirs; but no man withdrew his eyes from the boiler, or altered the solemn expression of his countenance in the slightest degree.

At length Joe returned—very talkative and conciliatory, as though with a strong presentiment that he was going to be found fault with.

"Such a thing as love is!" he said, drawing a chair near the fire, and looking round for sympathy. "He has set off to walk to London,—all the way to London. His nag gone lame in riding out here this blessed afternoon, and comfortably littered down in our stable at this minute; and he giving up a good hot supper and our best bed, because Miss Haredale has gone to a masquerade up in town, and he has set his heart upon seeing her! I don't think I could persuade myself to do that, beautiful as she is,—but then I'm not in love, (at least I don't think I am,) and that's the whole difference."

"He is in love then?" said the stranger.

"Rather," replied Joe. "He'll never be more in love, and may very easily be less."

"Silence, sir!" cried his father.

"What a chap you are, Joe!" said Long Parkes.

"Such a inconsiderate lad!" murmured Tom Cobb.

"Putting himself forward and wringing the very nose off his own father's face!" exclaimed the parish clerk, metaphorically.

"What *have* I done?" reasoned poor Joe.

"Silence, sir!" returned his father. "What do you mean by talking, when you see people that are more than two or three times your age, sitting still and silent, and not dreaming of saying a word?"

"Why that's the proper time for me to talk, isn't it?" said Joe rebelliously.

"The proper time, sir!" retorted his father; "the proper time's no time."

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"Ah, to be sure!" muttered Parkes, nodding gravely to the other two, who nodded likewise, observing under their breaths that that was the point.

"The proper time's no time, sir," repeated John Willet; "when I was your age I never talked, I never wanted to talk. I listened and improved myself, that's what I did."

"And you'd find your father rather a tough customer in argeyment, Joe, if anybody was to try and tackle him," said Parkes.

"For the matter o' that, Phil," observed Mr. Willet, blowing a long, thin, spiral cloud of smoke out of the corner of his mouth, and staring at it abstractedly as it floated away; "for the matter o' that, Phil, argeyment is a gift of Natur. If Natur has gifted a man with powers of argeyment, a man has a right to make the best of 'em, and has not a right to stand on false delicacy, and deny that he is so gifted; for that is a turning of his back on Natur, a flouting of her, a slighting of her precious caskets, and a proving of one's self to be a swine that isn't worth her scattering pearls before."

The landlord pausing here for a very long time, Mr. Parkes naturally concluded that he had brought his discourse to an end; and therefore, turning to the young man with some austerity, exclaimed:

"You hear what your father says, Joe? You wouldn't much like to tackle him in argeyment, I'm thinking, sir."

"—If," said John Willet, turning his eyes from the ceiling to the face of his interrupter, and uttering the monosyllable in capitals, to apprise him that he had put in his oar, as the vulgar say, with unbecoming and irreverent haste; "If, sir, Natur has fixed upon me the gift of argeyment, why should I not own to it, and rather glory in the same? Yes, sir, I *am* a tough customer that way. You are right, sir. My toughness has been proved, sir, in this room many and many a time, as I think you know; and if you don't know," added John, putting his pipe in his mouth again, "so much the better, for I an't proud, and am not going to tell you."

A general murmur from his three cronies, and a general shaking of heads at the copper boiler, assured John Willet that they had had good experience of his powers, and needed no further evidence to assure them of his superiority. John smoked with a little more dignity, and surveyed them in silence.

"It's all very fine talking," muttered Joe, who had been fidgeting in his chair with divers un-

easy gestures. "But if you mean to tell me that I'm never to open my lips——"

"Silence, sir!" roared his father. "No, you never are. When your opinion's wanted, you give it. When you're spoke to, you speak. When your opinion's not wanted, and you're not spoke to, don't you give an opinion, and don't you speak. The world's undergone a nice alteration since my time, certainly. My belief is that there an't any boys left—that there isn't such a thing as a boy—that there's nothing now between a male baby and a man—and that all the boys went out with his blessed Majesty King George the Second."

"That's a very true observation, always excepting the young princes," said the parish clerk, who, as the representative of church and state in that company, held himself bound to the nicest loyalty. "If it's godly and righteous for boys, being of the ages of boys, to behave themselves like boys, then the young princes must be boys, and cannot be otherwise."

"Did you ever hear tell of mermaids, sir?" said Mr. Willet.

"Certainly I have," replied the clerk.

"Very good," said Mr. Willet. "According to the constitution of mermaids, so much of a mermaid as is not a woman must be a fish. According to the constitution of young princes, so much of a young prince (if anything) as is not actually an angel, must be godly and righteous. Therefore if it's becoming and godly and righteous in the young princes (as it is at their ages) that they should be boys, they are and must be boys, and cannot by possibility be anything else."

This elucidation of a knotty point being received with such marks of approval as to put John Willet into a good humour, he contented himself with repeating to his son his command of silence, and addressing the stranger, said:

"If you had asked your questions of a grown-up person—of me or any of these gentlemen—you'd have had some satisfaction, and wouldn't have wasted breath. Miss Haredale is Mr. Geoffrey Haredale's niece."

"Is her father alive?" said the man carelessly.

"No," rejoined the landlord, "he is not alive, and he is not dead——"

"Not dead!" cried the other.

"Not dead in a common sort of way," said the landlord.

The cronies nodded to each other, and Mr. Parkes remarked in an under-tone, shaking his head meanwhile as who should say, "Let no man contradict me, for I won't believe him,"

that John Willet was in amazing force to-night, and fit to tackle a Chief Justice.

The stranger suffered a short pause to elapse, and then asked abruptly, "What do you mean?"

"More than you think for, friend," returned John Willet. "Perhaps there's more meaning in them words than you suspect."

"Perhaps there is," said the strange man gruffly; "but what the devil do you speak in such mysteries for? You tell me, first, that a man is not alive, nor yet dead—then, that he's not dead in a common sort of way—then, that you mean a great deal more than I think for. To tell you the truth, you may do that easily; for, so far as I can make out, you mean nothing. What *do* you mean, I ask again?"

"That," returned the landlord, a little brought down from his dignity by the stranger's surliness, "is a Maypole story, and has been any time these four-and-twenty years. That story is Solomon Daisy's story. It belongs to the house; and nobody but Solomon Daisy has ever told it under this roof, or ever shall—that's more."

The man glanced at the parish clerk, whose air of consciousness and importance plainly betokened him to be the person referred to, and observing that he had taken his pipe from his lips, after a very long whiff to keep it alight, and was evidently about to tell his story without further solicitation, gathered his large coat about him, and shrinking further back, was almost lost in the gloom of the spacious chimney-corner, except when the flame, struggling from under a great faggot whose weight almost crushed it for the time, shot upward with a strong and sudden glare, and illumining his figure for a moment, seemed afterwards to cast it into deeper obscurity than before.

By this flickering light, which made the old room, with its heavy timbers and panelled walls, look as if it were built of polished ebony—the wind roaring and howling without, now rattling the latch and creaking the hinges of the stout oaken door, and now driving at the casement as though it would beat it in—by this light, and under circumstances so auspicious, Solomon Daisy began his tale:

"It was Mr. Reuben Haredale, Mr. Geoffrey's elder brother——"

Here he came to a dead stop, and made so long a pause that even John Willet grew impatient, and asked why he did not proceed.

"Cobb," said Solomon Daisy, dropping his voice, and appealing to the post-office keeper; "what day of the month is this?"



"The nineteenth."

"Of March," said the clerk, bending forward, "the nineteenth of March; that's very strange."

In a low voice they all acquiesced, and Solomon went on:

"It was Mr. Reuben Haredale, Mr. Geoffrey's elder brother, that twenty-two years ago was the owner of the Warren, which, as Joe has said—not that you remember it, Joe, for a boy like you can't do that, but because you have often heard me say so—was then a much larger and better place, and a much more valuable property than it is now. His lady was lately dead, and he was left with one child—the Miss Haredale you have been inquiring about—who was then scarcely a year old."

Although the speaker addressed himself to the man who had shown so much curiosity about this same family, and made a pause here as if expecting some exclamation of surprise or encouragement, the latter made no remark, nor gave any indication that he heard or was interested in what was said. Solomon, therefore turned to his old companions, whose noses were brightly illuminated by the deep red glow from the bowls of their pipes: assured, by long experience, of their attention, and resolved to show his sense of such indecent behaviour.

"Mr. Haredale," said Solomon, turning his back upon the strange man, "left this place when his lady died, feeling it lonely like, and went up to London, where he stopped some months; but finding that place as lonely as this—as I suppose, and have always heard say—he suddenly came back again with his little girl to the Warren, bringing with him besides, that day, only two women servants, and his steward, and a gardener."

Mr. Daisy stopped to take a whiff at his pipe, which was going out, and then proceeded—at first in a snuffling tone, occasioned by keen enjoyment of the tobacco and strong pulling at the pipe, and afterwards with increasing distinctness:

"—Bringing with him two women servants, and his steward, and a gardener. The rest stopped behind up in London, and were to follow next day. It happened that that night, an old gentleman who lived at Chigwell Row, and had long been poorly, deceased, and an order came to me at half after twelve o'clock at night to go and toll the passing-bell."

There was a movement in the little group of listeners, sufficiently indicative of the strong repugnance any one of them would have felt to have turned out at such a time upon such an errand. The clerk felt and understood it, and pursued his theme accordingly:

"It *was* a dreary thing, especially as the grave-digger was laid up in his bed, from long working in a damp soil, and sitting down to take his dinner on cold tombstones, and I was consequently under obligations to go alone, for it was too late to hope to get any other companion. However, I wasn't unprepared for it, as the old gentleman had often made it a request that the bell should be tolled as soon as possible after the breath was out of his body, and he had been expected to go for some days. I put as good a face upon it as I could, and muffling myself up (for it was mortal cold), started out with a lighted lantern in one hand, and the key of the church in the other."

At this point of the narrative, the dress of the strange man rustled as if he had turned himself to hear more distinctly. Slightly pointing over his shoulder, Solomon elevated his eyebrows, and nodded a silent inquiry to Joe whether this was the case. Joe shaded his eyes with his hand and peered into the corner, but could make out nothing, and so shook his head.

"It was just such a night as this; blowing a hurricane, raining heavily, and very dark—I often think now, darker than I ever saw it before or since; that may be my fancy, but the houses were all close shut, and the folks indoors, and perhaps there is only one other man who knows how dark it really was. I got into the church, chained the door back so that it should keep ajar—for, to tell the truth, I didn't like to be shut in there alone—and putting my lantern on the stone seat in the little corner where the bell-rope is, sat down beside it to trim the candle.

"I sat down to trim the candle, and when I had done so, I could not persuade myself to get up again and go about my work. I don't know how it was, but I thought of all the ghost stories I had ever heard, even those that I had heard when I was a boy at school, and had forgotten long ago; and they didn't come into my mind one after another, but all crowding at once like. I recollected one story there was in the village, how that on a certain night in the year (it might be that very night for anything I knew) all the dead people came out of the ground, and sat at the heads of their own graves till morning. This made me think how many people I had known were buried between the church-door and the churchyard gate, and what a dreadful thing it would be to have to pass among them and know them again, so earthy and unlike themselves. I had known all the niches and arches in the church from a child; still, I couldn't persuade myself that those were their natural shadows



which I saw on the pavement, but felt sure there were some ugly figures hiding among 'em and peeping out. Thinking on in this way, I began to think of the old gentleman who was just dead, and I could have sworn, as I looked up the dark chancel, that I saw him in his usual place, wrapping his shroud about him, and shivering as if he felt it cold. All this time I sat listening and listening, and hardly dared to breathe. At length I started up, and took the bell-rope in my hands. At that minute there rang—not that bell, for I had hardly touched the rope—but another!

“I heard the ringing of another bell, and a deep bell too, plainly. It was only for an instant, and even then the wind carried the sound away, but I heard it. I listened for a long time, but it rang no more. I had heard of corpse candles, and at last I persuaded myself that this must be a corpse bell tolling of itself at midnight for the dead. I tolled my bell—how, or how long, I don't know—and ran home to bed as fast as I could touch the ground.

“I was up early next morning after a restless night, and told the story to my neighbours. Some were serious, and some made light of it: I don't think anybody believed it real. But, that morning, Mr. Reuben Haredale was found murdered in his bedchamber; and in his hand was a piece of the cord attached to an alarm-bell outside the roof, which hung in his room, and had been cut asunder, no doubt by the murderer, when he seized it.

“That was the bell I heard.

“A bureau was found opened, and a cash-box, which Mr. Haredale had brought down that day, and was supposed to contain a large sum of money, was gone. The steward and gardener were both missing and both suspected for a long time, but they were never found, though hunted far and wide. And far enough they might have looked for poor Mr. Rudge the steward, whose body—scarcely to be recognised by his clothes and the watch and ring he wore—was found, months afterwards, at the bottom of a piece of water in the grounds, with a deep gash in the breast where he had been stabbed with a knife. He was only partly dressed; and people all agreed that he had been sitting up reading in his own room, where there were many traces of blood, and was suddenly fallen upon and killed before his master.

“Everybody now knew that the gardener must be the murderer, and though he has never been heard of from that time to this, he will be, mark my words. The crime was committed this day two-and-twenty years—on the nineteenth of

March, one thousand seven hundred and fifty-three. On the nineteenth of March in some year—no matter when—I know it, I am sure of it, for we have always, in some strange way or other, been brought back to the subject on that day ever since—on the nineteenth of March in some year, sooner or later, that man will be discovered.”

## CHAPTER II.



“A STRANGE story!” said the man who had been the cause of the narration. “Stranger still if it comes about as you predict. Is that all?”

A question so unexpected nettled Solomon Daisy not a little. By dint of relating the story very often, and ornamenting it (according to village report) with a few flourishes suggested by the various hearers from time to time, he had come by degrees to tell it with great effect; and “Is that all?” after the climax, was not what he was accustomed to.

“Is that all?” he repeated. “Yes, that's all, sir. And enough, too, I think.”

“I think so too. My horse, young man! He is but a hack hired from a roadside posting-house, but he must carry me to London to-night.”

“To-night!” said Joe.

“To-night.” returned the other. “What do you stare at? This tavern would seem to be a house of call for all the gaping idlers of the neighbourhood!”

At this remark, which evidently had reference to the scrutiny he had undergone, as mentioned in the foregoing chapter, the eyes of John Willet and his friends were diverted with marvellous rapidity to the copper boiler again. Not so with Joe, who, being a mettlesome fellow, returned the stranger's angry glance with a steady look, and rejoined:

“It is not a very bold thing to wonder at your going on to-night. Surely you have been asked such a harmless question in an inn before, and in better weather than this. I thought you mightn't know the way, as you seem strange to this part.”

“The way——” repeated the other irritably.

“Yes. Do you know it?”

“I'll—humph!—I'll find it,” replied the man, waving his hand and turning on his heel. “Landlord, take the reckoning here.”

John Willet did as he was desired; for on that point he was seldom slow, except in the particulars of giving change, and testing the

goodness of any piece of coin that was proffered to him, by the application of his teeth or his tongue, or some other test, or, in doubtful cases, by a long series of tests terminating in its rejection. The guest then wrapped his garments about him so as to shelter himself as effectually as he could from the rough weather, and without any word or sign of farewell betook himself to the stable-yard. Here Joe (who had left the room on the conclusion of their short dialogue) was protecting himself and the horse from the rain under the shelter of an old pent-house roof.

"He's pretty much of my opinion," said Joe, patting the horse upon the neck. "I'll wager that your stopping here to-night would please him better than it would please me."

"He and I are of different opinions, as we have been more than once on our way here," was the short reply.

"So I was thinking before you came out, for he has feit your spurs, poor beast."

The stranger adjusted his coat collar about his face, and made no answer.

"You'll know me again, I see," he said, marking the young fellow's earnest gaze, when he had sprung into the saddle.

"The man's worth knowing, master, who travels a road he don't know, mounted on a jaded horse, and leaves good quarters to do it on such a night as this."

"You have sharp eyes and a sharp tongue I find."

"Both I hope by nature, but the last grows rusty sometimes for want of using."

"Use the first less too, and keep their sharpness for your sweethearts, boy," said the man.

So saying, he shook his hand from the bridle, struck him roughly on the head with the butt-end of his whip, and galloped away; dashing through the mud and darkness with a headlong speed, which few badly-mounted horsemen would have cared to venture, even had they been thoroughly acquainted with the country; and which, to one who knew nothing of the way he rode, was attended at every step with great hazard and danger.

The roads, even within twelve miles of London, were at that time ill-paved, seldom repaired, and very badly made. The way this rider traversed had been ploughed up by the wheels of heavy waggons, and rendered rotten by the frosts and thaws of the preceding winter, or possibly of many winters. Great holes and gaps had been worn into the soil, which, being now filled with water from the late rains, were not easily distinguishable even by day; and a plunge

into any one of them might have brought down a surer-footed horse than the poor beast now urged forward to the utmost extent of his powers. Sharp flints and stones rolled from under his hoofs continually; the rider could scarcely see beyond the animal's head, or farther on either side than his own arm would have extended. At that time, too, all the roads in the neighbourhood of the metropolis were infested by footpads or highwaymen, and it was a night, of all others, in which any evil-disposed person of this class might have pursued his unlawful calling with little fear of detection.

Still the traveller dashed forward at the same reckless pace, regardless alike of the dirt and wet which flew about his head, the profound darkness of the night, and the probability of encountering some desperate characters abroad. At every turn and angle, even where a deviation from the direct course might have been least expected, and could not possibly be seen until he was close upon it, he guided the bridle with an unerring hand, and kept the middle of the road. Thus he sped onward, raising himself in the stirrups, leaning his body forward, until it almost touched the horse's neck, and flourishing his heavy whip above his head with the fervour of a madman.

There are times when, the elements being in unusual commotion, those who are bent on daring enterprises, or agitated by great thoughts, whether of good or evil, feel a mysterious sympathy with the tumult of nature, and are roused into corresponding violence. In the midst of thunder, lightning, and storm, many tremendous deeds have been committed; men, self-possessed before, have given a sudden loose to passions they could no longer control. The demons of wrath and despair have striven to emulate those who ride the whirlwind and direct the storm; and man, lashed into madness with the roaring winds and boiling waters, has become for the time as wild and merciless as the elements themselves.

Whether the traveller was possessed by thoughts which the fury of the night had heated and stimulated into a quicker current, or was merely impelled by some strong motive to reach his journey's end, on he swept, more like a hunted phantom than a man, nor checked his pace until, arriving at some cross-roads, one of which led by a longer route to the place whence he had lately started, he bore down so suddenly upon a vehicle which was coming towards him, that in the effort to avoid it he well-nigh pulled his horse upon his haunches, and narrowly escaped being thrown.



"Yoho!" cried the voice of a man. "What's that? Who goes there?"

"A friend!" replied the traveller.

"A friend!" repeated the voice. "Who calls himself a friend and rides like that, abusing Heaven's gifts in the shape of horseflesh, and endangering, not only his own neck (which might be no great matter), but the necks of other people?"

"You have a lantern there, I see," said the traveller, dismounting; "lend it me for a moment. You have wounded my horse, I think, with your shaft or wheel."

"Wounded him!" cried the other; "if I haven't killed him, it's no fault of yours. What do you mean by galloping along the king's highway like that, eh?"

"Give me the light," returned the traveller, snatching it from his hand, "and don't ask idle questions of a man who is in no mood for talking."

"If you had said you were in no mood for talking before, I should perhaps have been in no mood for lighting," said the voice. "How's ever, as it's the poor horse that's damaged, and not you, one of you is welcome to the light at all events—but it's not the crusty one."

The traveller returned no answer to this speech but holding the light near to his panting and reeking beast, examined him in limb and carcase. Meanwhile, the other man sat very composedly in his vehicle, which was a kind of chaise with a depository for a large bag of tools, and watched his proceedings with a careful eye.

The looker-on was a round, red-faced, sturdy, yeoman, with a double chin, and a voice husky with good living, good sleeping, good humour, and good health. He was past the prime of life, but Father Time is not always a hard parent, and, though he tarries for none of his children, often lays his hand lightly upon those who have used him well; making them old men and women inexorably enough, but leaving their hearts and spirits young and in full vigour. With such people the grey head is but the impression of the old fellow's hand in giving them his blessing, and every wrinkle but a notch in the quiet calendar of a well-spent life.

The person whom the traveller had so abruptly encountered was of this kind: bluff, hale, hearty, and in a green old age: at peace with himself, and evidently disposed to be so with all the world. Although muffled up in divers coats and handkerchiefs—one of which, passed over his crown, and tied in a convenient crease of his double chin, secured his three-cornered hat and bob-wig from blowing off his head—there was no disguising his plump and comfortable figure;

neither did certain dirty finger-marks upon his face give it any other than an odd and comical expression, through which its natural good-humour shone with undiminished lustre.

"He is not hurt," said the traveller at length, raising his head and the lantern together.

"You have found that out at last, have you?" rejoined the old man. "My eyes have seen more light than yours, but I wouldn't change with you."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean! I could have told you he wasn't hurt five minutes ago. Give me the light, friend; ride forward at a gentler pace; and good night."

In handing up the lantern, the man necessarily cast its rays full on the speaker's face. Their eyes met at the instant. He suddenly dropped it and crushed it with his foot.

"Did you never see a locksmith before, that you start as if you had come upon a ghost?" cried the old man in the chaise, "or is this," he added hastily, thrusting his hand into the tool basket and drawing out a hammer, "a scheme for robbing me? I know these roads, friend. When I travel them, I carry nothing but a few shillings, and not a crown's worth of them. I tell you plainly, to save us both trouble, that there's nothing to be got from me but a pretty stout arm considering my years, and this tool, which, mayhap from long acquaintance with, I can use pretty briskly. You shall not have it all your own way, I promise you, if you play at that game." With these words he stood upon the defensive.

"I am not what you take me for, Gabriel Varden," replied the other.

"Then what and who are you?" returned the locksmith. "You know my name it seems. Let me know yours."

"I have not gained the information from any confidence of yours, but from the inscription on your cart, which tells it to all the town," replied the traveller.

"You have better eyes for that than you had for your horse then," said Varden, descending nimbly from his chaise. "Who are you? Let me see your face."

While the locksmith alighted, the traveller had regained his saddle, from which he now confronted the old man, who, moving as the horse moved in chafing under the tightened rein, kept close beside him.

"Let me see your face, I say."

"Stand off!"

"No masquerading tricks," said the locksmith, "and tales at the club to-morrow how Gabriel Varden was frightened by a surly voice and a dark night. Stand—let me see your face."

Finding that further resistance would only involve him in a personal struggle with an antagonist by no means to be despised, the traveller threw back his coat, and stooping down, looked steadily at the locksmith.

Perhaps two men more powerfully contrasted never opposed each other face to face. The ruddy features of the locksmith so set off and heightened the excessive paleness of the man on horseback, that he looked like a bloodless ghost, while the moisture, which hard riding had brought out upon his skin, hung there in dark and heavy drops, like dews of agony and death. The countenance of the old locksmith was lighted up with the smile of one expecting to detect in this unpromising stranger some latent roguery of eye or lip, which should reveal a familiar person in that arch disguise, and spoil his jest. The face of the other, sullen and fierce, but shrinking too, was that of a man who stood at bay; while his firmly-closed jaws, his puckered mouth, and, more than all, a certain stealthy motion of the hand within his breast, seemed to announce a desperate purpose very foreign to acting, or child's play.

Thus they regarded each other for some time in silence.

"Humph!" he said when he had scanned his features; "I don't know you."

"Don't desire to?" returned the other, muffling himself as before.

"I don't," said Gabriel; "to be plain with you, friend, you don't carry in your countenance a letter of recommendation."

"It's not my wish," said the traveller. "My humour is to be avoided."

"Well," said the locksmith bluntly, "I think you'll have your humour."

"I will at any cost," rejoined the traveller. "In proof of it, lay this to heart—that you were never in such peril of your life as you have been within these few moments: when you are within five minutes of breathing your last, you will not be nearer death than you have been to-night!"

"Ay!" said the sturdy locksmith.

"Ay! and a violent death."

"From whose hand?"

"From mine," replied the traveller.

With that he put spurs to his horse, and rode away; at first splashing heavily through the mire at a smart trot, but gradually increasing in speed until the last sound of his horse's hoofs died away upon the wind; when he was again hurrying on at the same furious gallop, which had been his pace when the locksmith first encountered him.

Gabriel Varden remained standing in the road

with the broken lantern in his hand, listening in stupefied silence until no sound reached his ear but the moaning of the wind and the fast-falling rain; when he struck himself one or two smart blows in the breast by way of rousing himself, and broke into an exclamation of surprise.

"What in the name of wonder can this fellow be? a madman? a highwayman? a cut-throat? If he had not scoured off so fast, we'd have seen who was in most danger, he or I. I never nearer death than I have been to-night! I hope I may be no nearer to it for a score of years to come—if so, I'll be content to be no farther from it. My stars!—a pretty brag this to a stout man—pooh, pooh!"

Gabriel resumed his seat, and looked wistfully up the road by which the traveller had come; murmuring in a half-whisper:

"The Maypole—two miles to the Maypole. I came the other road from the Warren after a long day's work at locks and bells, on purpose that I should not come by the Maypole, and break my promise to Martha by looking in—there's resolution! It would be dangerous to go on to London without a light; and it's four miles, and a good half-mile besides, to the Half-way House; and between this and that is the very place where one needs a light most. Two miles to the Maypole! I told Martha I wouldn't; I said I wouldn't, and I didn't—there's resolution!"

Repeating these two last words very often, as if to compensate for the little resolution he was going to show by piquing himself on the great resolution he had shown, Gabriel Varden quietly turned back, determining to get a light at the Maypole, and to take nothing but a light.

When he got to the Maypole, however, and Joe, responding to his well-known hail, came running out to the horse's head, leaving the door open behind him, and disclosing a delicious perspective of warmth and brightness—when the ruddy gleam of the fire, streaming through the old red curtains of the common room, seemed to bring with it, as part of itself, a pleasant hum of voices, and a fragrant odour of steaming grog and rare tobacco, all steeped as it were in the cheerful glow—when the shadows, flitting across the curtain, showed that those inside had risen from their snug seats, and were making room in the snugest corner (how well he knew that corner!) for the honest locksmith, and a broad glare, suddenly streaming up, bespoke the goodness of the crackling log from which a brilliant train of sparks was doubtless at that moment whirling up the chimney in honour of his coming—when, superadded to these enticements, there



stole upon him from the distant kitchen a gentle sound of frying, with a musical clatter of plates and dishes, and a savoury smell that made even the boisterous wind a perfume—Gabriel felt his firmness oozing rapidly away. He tried to look stoically at the tavern, but his features would relax into a look of fondness. He turned his head the other way, and the cold black country seemed to frown him off, and drive him for a refuge into its hospitable arms.

"The merciful man, Joe," said the locksmith, "is merciful to his beast. I'll get out for a little while."

And how natural it was to get out! And how unnatural it seemed for a sober man to be plodding wearily along through miry roads, encountering the rude buffets of the wind and pelting of the rain, when there was a clean floor covered with crisp white sand, a well-swept hearth, a blazing fire, a table decorated with white cloth, bright pewter flagons, and other tempting preparations for a well-cooked meal—when there were these things, and company disposed to make the most of them, all ready to his hand and entreating him to enjoyment!

### CHAPTER III.

**S**UCH were the locksmith's thoughts when first seated in the snug corner, and slowly recovering from a pleasant defect of vision—pleasant, because occasioned by the wind blowing in his eyes—which made it a matter of sound policy and duty to himself that he should take refuge from the weather, and tempted him, for the same reason, to aggravate a slight cough, and declare he felt but poorly. Such were still his thoughts more than a full hour afterwards, when, supper over, he still sat with shining jovial face in the same warm nook, listening to the cricket-like chirrup of little Solomon Daisy, and bearing no unimportant or slightly respected part in the social gossip round the Maypole fire.

"I wish he may be an honest man, that's all," said Solomon, winding up a variety of speculations relative to the stranger, concerning whom Gabriel had compared notes with the company, and so raised a grave discussion; "*I wish he may be an honest man.*"

"So we all do, I suppose, don't we?" observed the locksmith.

"I don't," said Joe.

"No!" cried Gabriel.

"No. He struck me with his whip, the coward, when he was mounted and I afoot, and I should be better pleased that he turned out what I think him."

"And what may that be, Joe?"

"No good, Mr. Varden. You may shake your head, father, but I say no good, and will say no good, and I would say no good a hundred times over, if that would bring him back to have the drubbing he deserves."

"Hold your tongue, sir," said John Willet.

"I won't, father. It's all along of you that he ventured to do what he did. Seeing me treated like a child, and put down like a fool, *he* plucks up a heart and has a fling at a fellow that he thinks—and may well think too—hasn't a grain of spirit. But he's mistaken, as I'll show him, and as I'll show all of you before long."

"Does the boy know what he's a saying of?" cried the astonished John Willet.

"Father," returned Joe, "I know what I say and mean well—better than you do when you hear me. I can bear with you, but I cannot bear the contempt that your treating me in the way you do brings upon me from others every day. Look at other young men of my age. Have they no liberty, no will, no right to speak? Are they obliged to sit mum-chance, and to be ordered about till they are the laughing-stock of young and old? I am a by-word all over Chigwell, and I say—and it's fairer my saying so now than waiting till you are dead, and I have got your money—I say, that before long I shall be driven to break such bounds, and that when I do, it won't be me that you'll have to blame, but your own self, and no other."

John Willet was so amazed by the exasperation and boldness of his hopeful son, that he sat as one bewildered, staring in a ludicrous manner at the boiler, and endeavouring, but quite ineffectually, to collect his tardy thoughts, and invent an answer. The guests, scarcely less disturbed, were equally at a loss; and at length, with a variety of muttered, half-expressed condolences and pieces of advice, rose to depart; being at the same time slightly muddled with liquor.

The honest locksmith alone addressed a few words of coherent and sensible advice to both parties, urging John Willet to remember that Joe was nearly arrived at man's estate, and should not be ruled with too tight a hand, and exhorting Joe himself to bear with his father's caprices, and rather endeavour to turn them aside by temperate remonstrance than by ill-timed rebellion. This advice was received as

such advice usually is. On John Willet it made almost as much impression as on the sign outside the door, while Joe, who took it in the best part, avowed himself more obliged than he could well express, but politely intimated his intention, nevertheless, of taking his own course uninfluenced by anybody.

"You have always been a very good friend to me, Mr. Varden," he said, as they stood without in the porch, and the locksmith was equipping

himself for his journey home; "I take it very kind of you to say all this, but the time's nearly come when the Maypole and I must part company."

"Roving stones gather no moss, Joe," said Gabriel.

"Nor milestones much," replied Joe. "I'm little better than one here, and see as much of the world."

"Then, what would you do, Joe?" pursued



"DOES THE BOY KNOW WHAT HE'S A SAYING OF?" CRIED THE ASTONISHED JOHN WILLET.

the locksmith, stroking his chin reflectively. "What could you be? Where could you go, you see?"

"I must trust to chance, Mr. Varden."

"A bad thing to trust to, Joe. I don't like it. I always tell my girl, when we talk about a husband for her, never to trust to chance, but to make sure beforehand that she has a good man and true, and then chance will neither make her nor break her. What are you fidgiting about

there, Joe? Nothing gone in the harness, I hope?"

"No, no," said Joe—finding, however, something very engrossing to do in the way of strapping and buckling. "Miss Dolly quite well?"

"Hearty, thankye. She looks pretty enough to be well, and good too."

"She's always both, sir——"

"So she is, thank God!"



"I hope," said Joe after some hesitation, "that you won't tell this story against me—this of my having been beat like the boy they'd make of me—at all events till I have met this man again and settled the account. It'll be a better story then."

"Why, who should I tell it to?" returned Gabriel. "They know it here, and I'm not likely to come across anybody else who would care about it."

"That's true enough," said the young fellow with a sigh. "I quite forgot that. Yes, that's true!"

So saying, he raised his face, which was very red,—no doubt from the exertion of strapping and buckling as aforesaid,—and giving the reins to the old man, who had by this time taken his seat, sighed again and bade him good night.

"Good night!" cried Gabriel. "Now think better of what we have just been speaking of, and don't be rash, there's a good fellow! I have an interest in you, and wouldn't have you cast yourself away. Good night!"

Returning his cheery farewell with cordial good-will, Joe Willet lingered until the sound of wheels ceased to vibrate in his ears, and then, shaking his head mournfully, re-entered the house.

Gabriel Varden went his way towards London, thinking of a great many things, and most of all of flaming terms in which to relate his adventure, and so account satisfactorily to Mrs. Varden for visiting the Maypole, despite certain solemn covenants between himself and that lady. Thinking begets, not only thought, but drowsiness occasionally, and the more the locksmith thought, the more sleepy he became.

A man may be very sober—or at least firmly set upon his legs on that neutral ground which lies between the confines of perfect sobriety and slight tipsiness—and yet feel a strong tendency to mingle up present circumstances with others which have no manner of connection with them; to confound all consideration of persons, things, times, and places; and to jumble his disjointed thoughts together in a kind of mental kaleidoscope, producing combinations as unexpected as they are transitory. This was Gabriel Varden's state, as nodding in his dog sleep, and leaving his horse to pursue a road with which he was well acquainted, he got over the ground unconsciously, and drew nearer and nearer home. He had roused himself once, when the horse stopped until the turnpike gate was opened, and had cried a lusty "Good night!" to the toll-keeper; but then he awoke out of a dream about picking a lock in the stomach of the

Great Mogul, and even when he did wake, mixed up the turnpike man with his mother-in-law, who had been dead twenty years. It is not surprising, therefore, that he soon relapsed, and jogged heavily along, quite insensible to his progress.

And now he approached the great city, which lay outstretched before him like a dark shadow on the ground, reddening the sluggish air with a deep dull light, that told of labyrinths of public ways and shops, and swarms of busy people. Approaching nearer and nearer yet, this halo began to fade, and the causes which produced it slowly to develop themselves. Long lines of poorly-lighted streets might be faintly traced, with here and there a lighter spot, where lamps were clustered about a square or market, or round some great building; after a time these grew more distinct, and the lamps themselves were visible; slight yellow specks, that seemed to be rapidly snuffed out one by one, as intervening obstacles hid them from the sight. Then, sounds arose—the striking of church clocks, the distant bark of dogs, the hum of traffic in the streets; then, outlines might be traced—tall steeples looming in the air, and piles of unequal roofs oppressed by chimneys; then, the noise swelled into a louder sound, and forms grew more distinct and numerous still, and London—visible in the darkness by its own faint light, and not by that of heaven—was at hand.

The locksmith, however, all unconscious of its near vicinity, still jogged on, half sleeping and half waking, when a loud cry, at no great distance ahead, roused him with a start.

For a moment or two he looked about him like a man who had been transported to some strange country in his sleep, but soon recognising familiar objects, rubbed his eyes lazily, and might have relapsed again, but that the cry was repeated—not once or twice or thrice, but many times, and each time, if possible, with increased vehemence. Thoroughly aroused, Gabriel, who was a bold man and not easily daunted, made straight to the spot, urging on his stout little horse as if for life or death.

The matter indeed looked sufficiently serious, for, coming to the place whence the cries had proceeded, he descried the figure of a man extended in an apparently lifeless state upon the pathway, and, hovering round him, another person with a torch in his hand, which he waved in the air with a wild impatience, redoubling meanwhile those cries for help which had brought the locksmith to the spot.

"What's here to do?" said the old man, alighting. "How's this—wh—t—Barnaby?"



The bearer of the torch shook his long loose hair back from his eyes, and thrusting his face eagerly into that of the locksmith, fixed upon him a look which told his history at once.

"You know me, Barnaby?" said Varden.

He nodded—not once or twice, but a score of times, and that with a fantastic exaggeration which would have kept his head in motion for an hour, but that the locksmith held up his finger, and fixing his eye sternly upon him, caused him to desist; then pointed to the body with an inquiring look.

"There's blood upon him," said Barnaby with a shudder. "It makes me sick."

"How came it there?" demanded Varden.

"Steel, steel, steel!" he replied fiercely, imitating with his hand the thrust of a sword.

"Is he robbed?" said the locksmith.

Barnaby caught him by the arm, and nodded "Yes;" then pointed towards the city.

"Oh!" said the old man, bending over the body, and looking round as he spoke into Barnaby's pale face, strangely lighted up by something which was *not* intellect. "The robber made off that way, did he? Well, well, never mind that just now. Hold your torch this way—a little further off—so. Now stand quiet, while I try to see what harm is done."

With these words, he applied himself to a closer examination of the prostrate form, while Barnaby, holding the torch as he had been directed, looked on in silence, fascinated by interest or curiosity, but repelled, nevertheless, by some strong and secret horror which convulsed him in every nerve.

As he stood, at that moment, half shrinking back and half bending forward, both his face and figure were full in the strong glare of the link, and as distinctly revealed as though it had been broad day. He was about three-and-twenty years old, and though rather spare, of a fair height and strong make. His hair, of which he had great profusion, was red, and hanging in disorder about his face and shoulders, gave to his restless looks an expression quite unearthly—enhanced by the paleness of his complexion, and the glassy lustre of his large protruding eyes. Startling as his aspect was, the features were good, and there was something even plaintive in his wan and haggard aspect. But the absence of the soul is far more terrible in a living man than in a dead one; and in this unfortunate being its noblest powers were wanting.

His dress was of green, clumsily trimmed here and there—apparently by his own hands—with

gaudy lace; brightest where the cloth was most worn and soiled, and poorest where it was at the best. A pair of tawdry ruffles dangled at his wrists, while his throat was nearly bare. He had ornamented his hat with a cluster of peacock's feathers, but they were limp and broken, and now trailed negligently down his back. Girt to his side was the steel hilt of an old sword without blade or scabbard; and some party-coloured ends of ribbons and poor glass toys completed the ornamental portion of his attire. The fluttered and confused disposition of all the motley scraps that formed his dress bespoke, in a scarcely less degree than his eager and unsettled manner, the disorder of his mind, and, by a grotesque contrast, set off and heightened the more impressive wildness of his face.

"Barnaby," said the locksmith, after a hasty but careful inspection, "this man is not dead, but he has a wound in his side, and is in a fainting fit."

"I know him, I know him!" cried Barnaby, clapping his hands.

"Know him?" repeated the locksmith.

"Hush!" said Barnaby, laying his fingers on his lips. "He went out to-day a wooing. I wouldn't for a light guinea that he should never go a wooing again, for, if he did, some eyes would grow dim that are now as bright as—See, when I talk of eyes, the stars come out! Whose eyes are they? If they are angels' eyes, why do they look down here and see good men hurt, and only wink and sparkle all the night?"

"Now Heaven help this silly fellow," murmured the perplexed locksmith, "can he know this gentleman? His mother's house is not far off; I had better see if she can tell me who he is. Barnaby, my man, help me to put him in the chaise, and we'll ride home together."

"I can't touch him!" cried the idiot, falling back, and shuddering as with a strong spasm; "he's bloody!"

"It's in his nature I know," muttered the locksmith, "it's cruel to ask him, but I must have help. Barnaby—good Barnaby—dear Barnaby—if you know this gentleman, for the sake of his life and everybody's life that loves him, help me to raise him and lay him down."

"Cover him then, wrap him close—don't let me see it—smell it—hear the word. Don't speak the word—don't!"

"No, no, I'll not. There, you see he's covered now. Gently. Well done, well done!"

They placed him in the carriage with great ease, for Barnaby was strong and active, but all

the time they were so occupied he shivered from head to foot, and evidently experienced an ecstasy of terror.

This accomplished, and the wounded man being covered with Varden's own great-coat, which he took off for the purpose, they pro-

ceeded onward at a brisk pace: Barnaby gaily counting the stars upon his fingers, and Gabriel inwardly congratulating himself upon having an adventure now which would silence Mrs. Varden on the subject of the Maypole for that night, or there was no faith in woman.



"I CAN'T TOUCH HIM!" CRIED THE IDIOT, FALLING BACK, AND SHUDDERING AS WITH A STRONG SPASM;  
"HE'S BLOODY!"

#### CHAPTER IV.

**I**N the venerable suburb—it was a suburb once—of Clerkenwell, towards that part of its confines which is nearest to the Charter House, and in one of those cool, shady streets, of which

a few, widely scattered and dispersed, yet remain in such old parts of the metropolis,—each tenement quietly vegetating like an ancient citizen who long ago retired from business, and dozing on in its infirmity until in course of time it tumbles down, and is replaced by some extrava-



gant young heir, flaunting in stucco and ornamental work, and all the vanities of modern days,—in this quarter, and in a street of this description, the business of the present chapter lies.

At the time of which it treats, though only six-and-sixty years ago, a very large part of what is London now had no existence. Even in the brains of the wildest speculators there had sprung up no long rows of streets connecting Highgate with Whitechapel, no assemblages of palaces in the swampy levels, nor little cities in the open fields. Although this part of town was then, as now, parcelled out in streets, and plentifully peopled, it wore a different aspect. There were gardens to many of the houses, and trees by the pavement side; with an air of freshness breathing up and down, which in these days would be sought in vain. Fields were nigh at hand, through which the New River took its winding course, and where there was merry hay-making in the summer-time. Nature was not so far removed, or hard to get at, as in these days; and although there were busy trades in Clerkenwell, and working jewellers by scores, it was a purer place, with farmhouses nearer to it than many modern Londoners would readily believe, and lovers' walks at no great distance, which turned into squalid courts long before the lovers of this age were born, or, as the phrase goes, thought of.

In one of these streets, the cleanest of them all, and on the shady side of the way—for good housewives know that sun-light damages their cherished furniture, and so choose the shade rather than its intrusive glare—there stood the house with which we have to deal. It was a modest building, not very straight, not large, not tall; not bold-faced, with great staring windows, but a shy blinking house, with a conical roof going up into a peak over its garret window of four small panes of glass, like a cocked-hat on the head of an elderly gentleman with one eye. It was not built of brick or lofty stone, but of wood and plaster; it was not planned with a dull and wearisome regard to regularity, for no one window matched the other, or seemed to have the slightest reference to anything besides itself.

The shop—for it had a shop—was, with reference to the first floor, where shops usually are; and there all resemblance between it and any other shop stopped short and ceased. People who went in and out didn't go up a flight of steps to it, or walk easily in upon a level with the street, but dived down three steep stairs, as into a cellar. Its floor was paved with

stone and brick, as that of any other cellar might be; and, in lieu of window framed and glazed, it had a great black wooden flap or shutter, nearly breast high from the ground, which turned back in the daytime, admitting as much cold air as light, and very often more. Behind this shop was a wainscoted parlour, looking first into a paved yard, and beyond that again into a little terrace garden raised some feet above it. Any stranger would have supposed that this wainscoted parlour, saving for the door of communication by which he had entered, was cut off and detached from all the world; and indeed most strangers, on their first entrance, were observed to grow extremely thoughtful, as weighing and pondering in their minds whether the upper rooms were only approachable by ladders from without; never suspecting that two of the most unassuming and unlikely doors in existence, which the most ingenious mechanic on earth must of necessity have supposed to be the doors of closets, opened out of this room—each without the smallest preparation, or so much as a quarter of an inch of passage—upon two dark winding flights of stairs, the one upward, the other downward, which were the sole means of communication between that chamber and the other portions of the house.

With all these oddities, there was not a neater, more scrupulously tidy, or more punctiliously-ordered house in Clerkenwell, in London, in all England. There were not cleaner windows, or whiter floors, or brighter stoves, or more highly-shining articles of furniture in old mahogany; there was not more rubbing, scrubbing, burnishing, and polishing in the whole street put together. Nor was this excellence attained without some cost and trouble and great expenditure of voice, as the neighbours were frequently reminded when the good lady of the house overlooked and assisted in its being put to rights on cleaning days—which were usually from Monday morning till Saturday night, both days inclusive.

Leaning against the door-post of this his dwelling, the locksmith stood early on the morning after he had met with the wounded man, gazing disconsolately at a great wooden emblem of a key, painted in vivid yellow to resemble gold, which dangled from the house-front, and swung to and fro with a mournful creaking noise, as if complaining that it had nothing to unlock. Sometimes he looked over his shoulder into the shop, which was so dark and dingy with numerous tokens of his trade, and so blackened by the smoke of a little forge,



near which his 'prentice was at work, that it would have been difficult for one unused to such espials to have distinguished anything but various tools of uncouth make and shape, great bunches of rusty keys, fragments of iron, half-finished locks, and such-like things, which garnished the walls and hung in clusters from the ceiling.

After a long and patient contemplation of the golden key, and many such backward glances, Gabriel stepped into the road, and stole a look at the upper windows. One of them chanced to be thrown open at the moment, and a roguish face met his; a face lighted up by the loveliest pair of sparkling eyes that ever locksmith looked upon; the face of a pretty, laughing girl; dimpled and fresh, and healthful—the very impersonation of good-humour and blooming beauty.

"Hush!" she whispered, bending forward and pointing archly to the window underneath. "Mother is still asleep."

"Still, my dear!" returned the locksmith in the same tone. "You talk as if she had been asleep all night, instead of little more than half an hour. But I'm very thankful. Sleep's a blessing—no doubt about it." The last few words he muttered to himself.

"How cruel of you to keep us up so late this morning, and never tell us where you were, or send us word!" said the girl.

"Ah, Dolly, Dolly!" returned the locksmith, shaking his head and smiling, "how cruel of you to run up-stairs to bed! Come down to breakfast, madcap, and come down lightly, or you'll wake your mother. She must be tired, I am sure—I am."

Keeping these latter words to himself, and returning his daughter's nod, he was passing into the workshop, with the smile she had awakened still beaming on his face, when he just caught sight of his 'prentice's brown-paper cap ducking down to avoid observation, and shrinking from the window back to its former place, which the wearer no sooner reached than he began to hammer lustily.

"Listening again, Simon!" said Gabriel to himself. "That's bad. What in the name of wonder does he expect the girl to say, that I always catch him listening when *she* speaks, and never at any other time? A bad habit, Sim, and sneaking, underhanded way. Ah! you may hammer, but you won't beat that out of me, if you work at it till your time's up!"

So saying, and shaking his head gravely, he re-entered the workshop, and confronted the subject of these remarks.

"There's enough of that just now," said the locksmith. "You needn't make any more of that confounded clatter. Breakfast's ready."

"Sir," said Sim, looking up with amazing politeness, and a peculiar little bow cut short off at the neck. "I shall attend you immediately."

"I suppose," muttered Gabriel, "that's out of the 'Prentice's Garland, or the 'Prentice's Delight, or the 'Prentice's Warbler, or the 'Prentice's Guide to the Gallows, or some such improving text-book. Now he's going to beautify himself—here's a precious locksmith!"

Quite unconscious that his master was looking on from the dark corner by the parlour door, Sim threw off the paper cap, sprang from his seat, and in two extraordinary steps, something between skating and minuet dancing, bounded to a washing place at the other end of the shop, and there removed from his face and hands all traces of his previous work—practising the same step all the time with the utmost gravity. This done, he drew from some concealed place a little scrap of looking-glass, and with its assistance arranged his hair, and ascertained the exact state of a little carbuncle on his nose. Having now completed his toilet, he placed the fragment of mirror on a low bench, and looked over his shoulder at so much of his legs as could be reflected in that small compass with the greatest possible complacency and satisfaction.

Sim, as he was called in the locksmith's family, or Mr. Simon Tappertit, as he called himself, and required all men to style him out of doors, on holidays, and Sundays out, was an old-fashioned, thin-faced, sleek-haired, sharp-nosed, small-eyed little fellow, very little more than five feet high, and thoroughly convinced in his own mind that he was above the middle size; rather tall, in fact, than otherwise. Of his figure, which was well enough formed, though somewhat of the leanest, he entertained the highest admiration; and with his legs, which, in knee breeches, were perfect curiosities of littleness, he was enraptured to a degree amounting to enthusiasm. He also had some majestic, shadowy ideas which had never been quite fathomed by his intimate friends, concerning the power of his eye. Indeed, he had been known to go so far as to boast that he could utterly quell and subdue the haughtiest beauty by a simple process, which he termed "eyeing her over;" but it must be added, that neither of this faculty, nor of the power he claimed to have, through the same gift, of vanquishing and heaving down dumb animals, even in a rabid state, had he ever furnished evidence which

could be deemed quite satisfactory and conclusive.

It may be inferred, from these premises, that in the small body of Mr. Tappertit there was locked up an ambitious and aspiring soul. As certain liquors, confined in casks too cramped in their dimensions, will ferment, and fret, and chafe in their imprisonment, so the spiritual essence or soul of Mr. Tappertit would sometimes fume within that precious cask, his body, until, with great foam and froth and splutter, it would force a vent, and carry all before it. It was his custom to remark, in reference to any one of these occasions, that his soul had got into his head; and in this novel kind of intoxication many scrapes and mishaps befell him, which he had frequently concealed with no small difficulty from his worthy master.

Sim Tappertit, among the other fancies upon which his before-mentioned soul was for ever feasting and regaling itself (and which fancies, like the liver of Prometheus, grew as they were fed upon), had a mighty notion of his order; and had been heard by the servant-maid openly expressing his regret that the 'prentices no longer carried clubs wherewith to mace the citizens: that was his strong expression. He was likewise reported to have said that in former times a stigma had been cast upon the body by the execution of George Barnwell, to which they should not have basely submitted, but should have demanded him of the legislature—temperately at first; then by an appeal to arms, if necessary—to be dealt with as they in their wisdom might think fit. These thoughts always led him to consider what a glorious engine the 'prentices might yet become if they had but a master spirit at their head; and then he would darkly, and to the terror of his hearers, hint at certain reckless fellows that he knew of, and at a certain Lion Heart ready to become their captain, who, once afoot, would make the Lord Mayor tremble on his throne.

In respect of dress and personal decoration, Sim Tappertit was no less of an adventurous and enterprising character. He had been seen beyond dispute to pull off ruffles of the finest quality at the corner of the street on Sunday nights, and to put them carefully in his pocket before returning home; and it was quite notorious that on all great holiday occasions it was his habit to exchange his plain steel knee-buckles for a pair of glittering paste, under cover of a friendly post, planted most conveniently in that same spot. Add to this, that he was in years just twenty, in his looks much older, and in conceit at least two hundred; that

he had no objection to be jested with touching his admiration of his master's daughter; and had even, when called upon at a certain obscure tavern to pledge the lady whom he honoured with his love, toasted, with many winks and leers, a fair creature whose Christian name, he said, began with a D—; and as much is known of Sim Tappertit, who has by this time followed the locksmith in to breakfast, as is necessary to be known in making his acquaintance.

It was a substantial meal; for, over and above the ordinary tea equipage, the board creaked beneath the weight of a jolly round of beef, a ham of the first magnitude, and sundry towers of buttered Yorkshire cake, piled slice upon slice in most alluring order. There was also a goodly jug of well-browned clay, fashioned into the form of an old gentleman, not by any means unlike the locksmith, atop of whose bald head was a fine white froth answering to his wig, indicative, beyond dispute, of sparkling home-brewed ale. But, better far than fair home-brewed, or Yorkshire cake, or ham, or beef, or anything to eat or drink that earth or air or water can supply, there sat, presiding over all, the locksmith's rosy daughter, before whose dark eyes even beef grew insignificant, and malt became as nothing.

Fathers should never kiss their daughters when young men are by. It's too much. There are bounds to human endurance. So thought Sim Tappertit when Gabriel drew those rosy lips to his—those lips within Sim's reach from day to day, and yet so far off. He had a respect for his master, but he wished the Yorkshire cake might choke him.

"Father," said the locksmith's daughter, when this salute was over, and they took their seats at table, "what is this I hear about last night?"

"All true, my dear; true as the Gospel, Doll."

"Young Mr. Chester robbed, and lying wounded in the road, when you came up?"

"Ay—Mr. Edward. And beside him, Barnaby calling for help with all his might. It was well it happened as it did; for the road's a lonely one, the hour was late, and, the night being cold, and poor Barnaby even less sensible than usual from surprise and fright, the young gentleman might have met his death in a very short time."

"I dread to think of it!" cried his daughter with a shudder. "How did you know him?"

"Know him!" returned the locksmith. "I didn't know him—how could I? I had never seen him, often as I had heard and spoken of him. I took him to Mrs. Rudge's; and she no sooner saw him than the truth came out."



"Miss Emma, father! If this news should reach her, enlarged upon as it is sure to be, she will go distracted."

"Why, lookye there again, how a man suffers for being good-natured," said the locksmith. "Miss Emma was with her uncle at the masquerade at Carlisle House, where she had gone, as the people at the Warren told me, sorely against her will. What does your blockhead father, when he and Mrs. Rudge have laid their heads together, but goes there when he ought to be

abed, makes interest with his friend the door-keeper, slips him on a mask and domino, and mixes with the masquers."

"And like himself to do so!" cried the girl, putting her fair arm round his neck, and giving him a most enthusiastic kiss.

"Like himself!" repeated Gabriel, affecting to grumble, but evidently delighted with the part he had taken, and with her praise. "Very like himself—so your mother said. However, he mingled with the crowd, and prettily worried



"THOSE LIPS WITHIN SIM'S REACH FROM DAY TO DAY, AND YET SO FAR OFF."

and badgered he was, I warrant you, with people squeaking, 'Don't you know me?' and 'I've found you out,' and all that kind of nonsense in his ears. He might have wandered on till now, but in a little room there was a young lady who had taken off her mask, on account of the place being very warm, and was sitting there alone."

"And that was she?" said his daughter hastily.

"And that was she," replied the locksmith; "and I no sooner whispered to her what the

matter was—as softly, Doll, and with nearly as much art as you could have used yourself—than she gives a kind of scream and faints away."

"What did you do—what happened next?" asked his daughter.

"Why, the masks came flocking round, with a general noise and hubbub, and I thought myself in luck to get clear off, that's all," rejoined the locksmith. "What happened when I reached home you may guess, if you didn't hear



it. Ah! Well, it's a poor heart that never rejoices.—Put Toby this way, my dear."

This Toby was the brown jug of which previous mention has been made. Applying his lips to the worthy old gentleman's benevolent forehead, the locksmith, who had all this time been ravaging among the eatables, kept them there so long, at the same time raising the vessel slowly in the air, that at length Toby stood on his head upon his nose, when he smacked his lips and set him on the table again with fond reluctance.

Although Sim Tappertit had taken no share in this conversation, no part of it being addressed to him, he had not been wanting in such silent manifestations of astonishment as he deemed most compatible with the favourable display of his eyes. Regarding the pause which now ensued as a particularly advantageous opportunity for doing great execution with them upon the locksmith's daughter (who he had no doubt was looking at him in mute admiration), he began to screw and twist his face, and especially those features, into such extraordinary, hideous, and unparalleled contortions, that Gabriel, who happened to look towards him, was stricken with amazement.

"Why, what the devil's the matter with the lad?" cried the locksmith. "Is he choking?"

"Who?" demanded Sim with some disdain.

"Who? Why you," returned his master. "What do you mean by making those horrible faces over your breakfast?"

"Faces are matters of taste, sir," said Mr. Tappertit, rather discomfited; not the less so because he saw the locksmith's daughter smiling.

"Sim," rejoined Gabriel, laughing heartily, "don't be a fool, for I'd rather see you in your senses. These young fellows," he added, turning to his daughter, "are always committing some folly or another. There was a quarrel between Joe Willet and old John last night—though I can't say Joe was much in fault either. He'll be missing one of these mornings, and will have gone away upon some wild-goose errand, seeking his fortune.—Why, what's the matter, Doll? You are making faces now. The girls are as bad as the boys every bit!"

"It's the tea," said Dolly, turning alternately very red and very white, which is no doubt the effect of a slight scald—"so very hot."

Mr. Tappertit looked immensely big at a quartern loaf on the table, and breathed hard.

"Is that all?" returned the locksmith. "Put some more milk in it.—Yes, I am sorry for Joe, because he is a likely young fellow, and gains upon one every time one sees him. But he'll

start off, you'll find. Indeed, he told me as much himself!"

"Indeed!" cried Dolly in a faint voice. "In—deed!"

"Is the tea tickling your throat still, my dear?" said the locksmith.

But, before his daughter could make him any answer, she was taken with a troublesome cough, and it was such a very unpleasant cough that, when she left off, the tears were starting in her bright eyes. The good-natured locksmith was still patting her on the back and applying such gentle restoratives, when a message arrived from Mrs. Varden, making known to all whom it might concern, that she felt too much indisposed to rise after her great agitation and anxiety of the previous night; and therefore desired to be immediately accommodated with the little black teapot of strong mixed tea, a couple of rounds of buttered toast, a middling-sized dish of beef and ham cut thin, and the Protestant Manual in two volumes, post octavo. Like some other ladies who in remote ages flourished upon this globe, Mrs. Varden was most devout when most ill-tempered. Whenever she and her husband were at unusual variance, then the Protestant Manual was in high feather.

Knowing from experience what these requests portended, the triumvirate broke up; Dolly, to see the orders executed with all dispatch; Gabriel, to some out-of-door work in his little chaise; and Sim, to his daily duty in the workshop, to which retreat he carried the big look, although the loaf remained behind.

Indeed, the big look increased immensely, and when he had tied his apron on, became quite gigantic. It was not until he had several times walked up and down with folded arms, and the longest strides he could take, and had kicked a great many small articles out of his way, that his lip began to curl. At length, a gloomy derision came upon his features, and he smiled; uttering meanwhile with supreme contempt the monosyllable "Joe!"

"I eyed her over while he talked about the fellow," he said, "and that was of course the reason of her being confused. Joe!"

He walked up and down again much quicker than before, and if possible with longer strides; sometimes stopping to take a glance at his legs, and sometimes to jerk out and cast from him another "Joe!" In the course of a quarter of an hour or so he again assumed the paper cap and tried to work. No. It could not be done.

"I'll do nothing to-day," said Mr. Tappertit, dashing it down again, "but grind. I'll grind

up all the tools. Grinding will suit my present humour well. Joe!"

Whirr-r-r-r. The grindstone was soon in motion; the sparks were flying off in showers. This was the occupation for his heated spirit.

Whirr-r-r-r-r-r-r.

"Something will come of this!" said Mr. Tappertit, pausing as if in triumph, and wiping his heated face upon his sleeve. "Something will come of this. I hope it mayn't be human gore!"

Whirr-r-r-r-r-r-r-r.

## CHAPTER V.

AS soon as the business of the day was over, the locksmith sallied forth alone to visit the wounded gentleman and ascertain the progress of his recovery. The house where he had left him was in a by-street in Southwark, not far from London Bridge; and thither he hied with all speed, bent upon returning with as little delay as might be, and getting to bed betimes.

The evening was boisterous—scarcely better than the previous night had been. It was not easy for a stout man like Gabriel to keep his legs at the street corners, or to make head against the high wind, which often fairly got the better of him and drove him back some paces, or, in defiance of all his energy, forced him to take shelter in an arch or doorway until the fury of the gust was spent. Occasionally a hat or wig, or both, came spinning and trundling past him, like a mad thing; while the more serious spectacle of falling tiles and slates, or of masses of brick and mortar or fragments of stone-coping rattling upon the pavement near at hand, and splitting into fragments, did not increase the pleasure of the journey, or make the way less dreary.

"A trying night for a man like me to walk in!" said the locksmith, as he knocked softly at the widow's door. "I'd rather be in old John's chimney-corner, faith!"

"Who's there?" demanded a woman's voice from within. Being answered, it added a hasty word of welcome, and the door was quickly opened.

She was about forty—perhaps two or three years older—with a cheerful aspect, and a face that had once been pretty. It bore traces of affliction and care, but they were of an old date, and Time had smoothed them. Any one who

had bestowed but a casual glance on Barnaby might have known that this was his mother, from the strong resemblance between them; but where in his face there was wildness and vacancy, in hers there was the patient composure of long effort and quiet resignation.

One thing about this face was very strange and startling. You could not look upon it in its most cheerful mood without feeling that it had some extraordinary capacity of expressing terror. It was not on the surface. It was in no one feature that it lingered. You could not take the eyes, or mouth, or lines upon the cheek, and say if this or that were otherwise, it would not be so. Yet there it always lurked—something for ever dimly seen, but ever there, and never absent for a moment. It was the faintest, palest shadow of some look, to which an instant of intense and most unutterable horror only could have given birth; but indistinct and feeble as it was, it did suggest what that look must have been, and fixed it in the mind as if it had had existence in a dream.

More faintly imaged, and wanting force and purpose, as it were, because of his darkened intellect, there was this same stamp upon the son. Seen in a picture, it must have had some legend with it, and would have haunted those who looked upon the canvas. They who knew the Maypole story, and could remember what the widow was before her husband's and his master's murder, understood it well. They recollected how the change had come, and could call to mind that when her son was born, upon the very day the deed was known, he bore upon his wrist what seemed a smear of blood but half washed out.

"God save you, neighbour!" said the locksmith, as he followed her with the air of an old friend into a little parlour where a cheerful fire was burning.

"And you," she answered, smiling. "Your kind heart has brought you here again. Nothing will keep you at home, I know of old, if there are friends to serve or comfort out of doors."

"Tut, tut," returned the locksmith, rubbing his hands and warming them. "You women are such talkers. What of the patient, neighbour?"

"He is sleeping now. He was very restless towards daylight, and for some hours tossed and tumbled sadly. But the fever has left him, and the doctor says he will soon mend. He must not be removed until to-morrow."

"He has had visitors to-day—humph?" said Gabriel shily.



"Yes. Old Mr. Chester has been here ever since we sent for him, and had not been gone many minutes when you knocked."

"No ladies?" said Gabriel, elevating his eyebrows and looking disappointed.

"A letter," replied the widow.

"Come. That's better than nothing!" cried the locksmith. "Who was the bearer?"

"Barnaby, of course."

"Barnaby's a jewel!" said Varden; "and comes and goes with ease where we who think ourselves much wiser would make but a poor hand of it. He is not out wandering again, I hope?"

"Thank Heaven, he is in his bed; having been up all night, as you know, and on his feet all day. He was quite tired out. Ah, neighbour, if I could but see him oftener so—if I could but tame down that terrible restlessness—"

"In good time," said the locksmith kindly, "in good time—don't be down-hearted. To my mind he grows wiser every day."

The widow shook her head. And yet, though she knew the locksmith sought to cheer her, and spoke from no conviction of his own, she was glad to hear even this praise of her poor benighted son.

"He will be a 'cute man yet," resumed the locksmith. "Take care, when we are growing old and foolish, Barnaby doesn't put us to the blush, that's all. But our other friend," he added, looking under the table and about the floor—"sharpest and cunningest of all the sharp and cunning ones—where's he?"

"In Barnaby's room," rejoined the widow with a faint smile.

"Ah! He's a knowing blade!" said Varden, shaking his head. "I should be sorry to talk secrets before him. Oh! He's a deep customer. I've no doubt he can read, and write, and cast accounts if he chooses. What was that—him tapping at the door?"

"No," returned the widow. "It was in the street, I think. Hark! Yes. There again! 'Tis some one knocking softly at the shutter. Who can it be?"

They had been speaking in a low tone, for the invalid lay overhead, and the walls and ceilings being thin and poorly built, the sound of their voices might otherwise have disturbed his slumber. The party without, whoever it was, could have stood close to the shutter without hearing anything spoken; and, seeing the light through the chinks and finding all so quiet, might have been persuaded that only one person was there.

"Some thief or ruffian, maybe," said the locksmith. "Give me the light."

"No, no," she returned hastily. "Such visitors have never come to this poor dwelling. Do you stay here. You're within call, at the worst. I would rather go myself—alone."

"Why?" said the locksmith, unwillingly relinquishing the candle he had caught up from the table.

"Because—I don't know why—because the wish is strong upon me," she rejoined. "There again—do not detain me, I beg of you!"

Gabriel looked at her in great surprise to see one who was usually so mild and quiet thus agitated, and with so little cause. She left the room and closed the door behind her. She stood for a moment, as if hesitating, with her hand upon the lock. In this short interval the knocking came again, and a voice close to the window—a voice the locksmith seemed to recollect, and to have some disagreeable association with—whispered, "Make haste."

The words were uttered in that low distinct voice which finds its way so readily to sleepers' ears, and wakes them in a fright. For a moment it startled even the locksmith, who involuntarily drew back from the window, and listened.

The wind rumbling in the chimney made it difficult to hear what passed, but he could tell that the door was opened, that there was the tread of a man upon the creaking boards, and then a moment's silence—broken by a suppressed something which was not a shriek, or groan, or cry for help, and yet might have been either or all three; and the words "My God!" uttered in a voice it chilled him to hear.

He rushed out upon the instant. There, at last, was that dreadful look—the very one he seemed to know so well, and yet had never seen before—upon her face. There she stood, frozen to the ground, gazing with starting eyes, and livid cheeks, and every feature fixed and ghastly, upon the man he had encountered in the dark last night. His eyes met those of the locksmith. It was but a flash, an instant, a breath upon a polished glass, and he was gone.

The locksmith was upon him—had the skirts of his streaming garment almost in his grasp—when his arms were tightly clutched, and the widow flung herself upon the ground before him.

"The other way—the other way!" she cried. "He went the other way. Turn—turn!"

"The other way! I see him now," rejoined the locksmith, pointing—"yonder—there—"



there is his shadow passing by that light. What—who is this? Let me go."

"Come back, come back!" exclaimed the woman, clasping him. "Do not touch him on your life. I charge you, come back. He carries other lives besides his own. Come back!"

"What does this mean?" cried the locksmith.

"No matter what it means, don't ask, don't speak, don't think about it. He is not to be followed, checked, or stopped. Come back!"

The old man looked at her in wonder, as she writhed and clung about him; and borne down by her passion, suffered her to drag him into the house. It was not until she had chained and double-locked the door, fastened every bolt and bar with the heat and fury of a maniac, and drawn him back into the room, that she turned upon him, once again, that stony look of horror, and sinking down into a chair, covered her face, and shuddered, as though the hand of death were on her.

## CHAPTER VI.

**B**YOND all measure astonished by the strange occurrences which had passed with so much violence and rapidity, the locksmith gazed upon the shuddering figure in the chair like one half stupefied, and would have gazed much longer, had not his tongue been loosened by compassion and humanity.

"You are ill," said Gabriel. "Let me call some neighbour in."

"Not for the world," she rejoined, motioning to him with her trembling hand, and still holding her face averted. "It is enough that you have been by to see this."

"Nay, more than enough—or less," said Gabriel.

"Be it so," she returned. "As you like. Ask me no questions, I entreat you."

"Neighbour," said the locksmith after a pause, "is this fair, or reasonable, or just to yourself? Is it like you, who have known me so long and sought my advice in all matters—like you, who from a girl have had a strong mind and a staunch heart?"

"I have had need of them," she replied. "I am growing old, both in years and care. Perhaps that, and too much trial, have made them weaker than they used to be. Do not speak to me."

"How can I see what I have seen, and hold

my peace?" returned the locksmith. "Who was that man, and why has his coming made this change in you?"

She was silent, but held to the chair as though to save herself from falling on the ground.

"I take the licence of an old acquaintance, Mary," said the locksmith, "who has ever had a warm regard for you, and maybe has tried to prove it when he could. Who is this ill-favoured man, and what has he to do with you? Who is this ghost, that is only seen in the black nights and bad weather? How does he know, and why does he haunt, this house, whispering through chinks and crevices, as if there was that between him and you which neither durst so much as speak aloud of? Who is he?"

"You do well to say he haunts this house," returned the widow faintly. "His shadow has been upon it and me, in light and darkness, at noonday and midnight. And now, at last, he has come in the body!"

"But he wouldn't have gone in the body," returned the locksmith with some irritation, "if you had left my arms and legs at liberty. What riddle is it?"

"It is one," she answered, rising as she spoke, "that must remain for ever as it is. I dare not say more than that."

"Dare not!" repeated the wondering locksmith.

"Do not press me," she replied. "I am sick and faint, and every faculty of life seems dead within me.—No! Do not touch me either."

Gabriel, who had stepped forward to render her assistance, fell back as she made this hasty exclamation, and regarded her in silent wonder.

"Let me go my way alone," she said in a low voice, "and let the hands of no honest man touch mine to-night." When she had tottered to the door, she turned, and added with a stronger effort, "This is a secret, which, of necessity, I trust to you. You are a true man. As you have ever been good and kind to me, keep it. If any noise was heard above, make some excuse—say anything but what you really saw, and never let a word or look between us recall this circumstance. I trust to you. Mind, I trust to you. How much I trust you never can conceive."

Casting her eyes upon him for an instant, she withdrew, and left him there alone.

Gabriel, not knowing what to think, stood staring at the door with a countenance full of surprise and dismay. The more he pondered on what had passed, the less able he was to give it any favourable interpretation. To find

this widow woman, whose life for so many years had been supposed to be one of solitude and retirement, and who, in her quiet suffering character, had gained the good opinion and respect of all who knew her—to find her linked mysteriously with an ill-omened man, alarmed at his appearance, and yet favouring his escape, was a discovery that pained as much as it startled him. Her reliance on his secrecy, and his tacit acquiescence, increased his distress of mind. If he had spoken boldly, persisted in questioning her, detained her when she rose to leave the room, made any kind of protest, instead of silently compromising himself, as he felt he had done, he would have been more at ease.

“Why did I let her say it was a secret, and she trusted it to me?” said Gabriel, putting his wig on one side to scratch his head with greater ease, and looking ruefully at the fire. “I have no more readiness than old John himself. Why didn’t I say firmly, ‘You have no right to such secrets, and I demand of you to tell me what this means,’ instead of standing gaping at her, like an old mooncalf as I am? But there’s my weakness. I can be obstinate enough with men if need be, but women may twist me round their fingers at their pleasure.”

He took his wig off outright as he made this reflection, and, warming his handkerchief at the fire, began to rub and polish his bald head with it until it glistened again.

“And yet,” said the locksmith, softening under this soothing process, and stopping to smile, “it *may* be nothing. Any drunken brawler trying to make his way into the house would have alarmed a quiet soul like her. But then”—and here was the vexation—“how came it to be that man; how comes he to have this influence over her; how came she to favour his getting away from me; and, more than all, how came she not to say it was a sudden fright, and nothing more? It’s a sad thing to have, in one minute, reason to mistrust a person I have known so long, and an old sweetheart into the bargain: but what else can I do with all this upon my mind?—Is that Barnaby outside there?”

“Ay!” he cried, looking in and nodding. “Sure enough it’s Barnaby. How did you guess?”

“By your shadow,” said the locksmith.

“Oho!” cried Barnaby, glancing over his shoulder. “He’s a merry fellow, that shadow, and keeps close to me, though I *am* silly. We have such pranks, such walks, such runs, such gambols on the grass! Sometimes he’ll be half

as tall as a church steeple, and sometimes no bigger than a dwarf. Now he goes on before, and now behind, and anon he’ll be stealing slyly on, on this side, or on that, stopping whenever I stop, and thinking I can’t see him, though I have my eye on him sharp enough. Oh! he’s a merry fellow. Tell me—is he silly too? I think he is.”

“Why?” asked Gabriel.

“Because he never tires of mocking me, but does it all day long.—Why don’t you come?”

“Where?”

“Up-stairs. He wants you. Stay—where’s *his* shadow? Come. You’re a wise man; tell me that.”

“Beside him, Barnaby; beside him, I suppose,” returned the locksmith.

“No!” he replied, shaking his head. “Guess again.”

“Gone out a walking, maybe?”

“He has changed shadows with a woman,” the idiot whispered in his ear, and then fell back with a look of triumph. “Her shadow’s always with him, and his with her. That’s sport I think, eh?”

“Barnaby,” said the locksmith with a grave look; “come hither, lad.”

“I know what you want to say. I know!” he replied, keeping away from him. “But I’m cunning, I’m silent. I only say so much to you.—Are you ready?” As he spoke, he caught up the light, and waved it with a wild laugh above his head.

“Softly—gently,” said the locksmith, exerting all his influence to keep him calm and quiet. “I thought you had been asleep.”

“So I *have* been asleep,” he rejoined with widely-opened eyes. “There have been great faces coming and going—close to my face, and then a mile away—low places to creep through, whether I would or no—high churches to fall down from—strange creatures crowded together neck and heels, to sit upon the bed—that’s sleep, eh?”

“Dreams, Barnaby, dreams,” said the locksmith.

“Dreams!” he echoed softly, drawing closer to him. “Those are not dreams.”

“What are,” replied the locksmith, “if they are not?”

“I dreamed,” said Barnaby, passing his arm through Varden’s, and peering close into his face as he answered in a whisper, “I dreamed just now that something—it was in the shape of a man—followed me—came softly after me—wouldn’t let me be—but was always hiding and crouching, like a cat in dark corners, waiting

till I should pass ; when it crept out and came softly after me.—Did you ever see me run ?”

“Many a time, you know.”

“You never saw me run as I did in this dream. Still it came creeping on to worry me. Nearer, nearer, nearer—I ran faster—leaped—sprung out of bed, and to the window—and there, in the street below—— But he is waiting for us. Are you coming ?”

“What in the street below, Barnaby ?” said Varden, imagining that he traced some connection between this vision and what had actually occurred.

Barnaby looked into his face, muttered incoherently, waved the light above his head again, laughed, and drawing the locksmith’s arm more tightly through his own, led him up the stairs in silence.

They entered a homely bedchamber, garnished in a scanty way with chairs whose spindle-shanks bespoke their age, and other furniture of very little worth ; but clean and neatly kept. Reclining in an easy-chair before the fire, pale and weak from waste of blood, was Edward Chester, the young gentleman who had been the first to quit the Maypole on the previous night, and who, extending his hand to the locksmith, welcomed him as his preserver and friend.

“Say no more, sir, say no more,” said Gabriel. “I hope I would have done at least as much for any man in such a strait, and most of all for you, sir. A certain young lady,” he added with some hesitation, “has done us many a kind turn, and we naturally feel—— I hope I give you no offence in saying this, sir ?”

The young man smiled and shook his head ; at the same time moving in his chair as if in pain.

“It’s no great matter,” he said, in answer to the locksmith’s sympathising look, “a mere uneasiness, arising at least as much from being cooped up here as from the slight wound I have, or from the loss of blood. Be seated, Mr. Varden.”

“If I may make so bold, Mr. Edward, as to lean upon your chair,” returned the locksmith, accommodating his action to his speech, and bending over him, “I’ll stand here, for the convenience of speaking low. Barnaby is not in his quietest humour to-night, and at such times talking never does him good.”

They both glanced at the subject of this remark, who had taken a seat on the other side of the fire, and, smiling vacantly, was making puzzles on his fingers with a skein of string.

“Pray tell me, sir,” said Varden, dropping

his voice still lower, “exactly what happened last night. I have my reason for inquiring. You left the Maypole alone ?”

“And walked homeward alone until I had nearly reached the place where you found me, when I heard the gallop of a horse.”

“Behind you ?” said the locksmith.

“Indeed, yes—behind me. It was a single rider, who soon overtook me, and checking his horse, inquired the way to London.”

“You were on the alert, sir, knowing how many highwaymen there are scouring the roads in all directions ?” said Varden.

“I was, but I had only a stick, having imprudently left my pistols in their holster case with the landlord’s son. I directed him as he desired. Before the words had passed my lips, he rode upon me furiously, as if bent on trampling me down beneath his horse’s hoofs. In starting aside, I slipped and fell. You found me with this stab and an ugly bruise or two, and without my purse—in which he found little enough for his pains. And now, Mr. Varden,” he added, shaking the locksmith by the hand, “saving the extent of my gratitude to you, you know as much as I.”

“Except,” said Gabriel, bending down yet more, and looking cautiously towards their silent neighbour, “except in respect of the robber himself. What like was he, sir ? Speak low, if you please. Barnaby means no harm, but I have watched him oftener than you, and I know, little as you would think it, that he’s listening now.”

It required a strong confidence in the locksmith’s veracity to lead any one to this belief, for every sense and faculty that Barnaby possessed seemed to be fixed upon his game, to the exclusion of all other things. Something in the young man’s face expressed this opinion, for Gabriel repeated what he had just said, more earnestly than before, and with another glance towards Barnaby, again asked what like the man was.

“The night was so dark,” said Edward, “the attack so sudden, and he so wrapped and muffled up, that I can hardly say. It seems that——”

“Don’t mention his name, sir,” returned the locksmith, following his look towards Barnaby ; “I know *he* saw him. I want to know what *you* saw.”

“All I remember is,” said Edward, “that as he checked his horse his hat was blown off. He caught it and replaced it on his head, which I observed was bound with a dark handkerchief. A stranger entered the Maypole while I was



there, whom I had not seen—for I sat apart for reasons of my own—and when I rose to leave the room and glanced round, he was in the shadow of the chimney, and hidden from my sight. But, if he and the robber were two different persons, their voices were strangely and most remarkably alike; for directly the man addressed me in the road, I recognised his speech again."

"It is as I feared. The very man was here to-night," thought the locksmith, changing colour. "What dark history is this?"

"Halloa!" cried a hoarse voice in his ear. "Halloa, halloa, halloa! Bow, wow, wow. What's the matter here? Hal-loa!"

The speaker—who made the locksmith start as if he had seen some supernatural agent—was a large raven, who had perched upon the top of the easy-chair, unseen by him and Edward, and listened with a polite attention, and a most extraordinary appearance of comprehending every word, to all they had said up to this point; turning his head from one to the other, as if his office were to judge between them, and it were of the very last importance that he should not lose a word.

"Look at him!" said Varden, divided between admiration of the bird and a kind of fear of him. "Was there ever such a knowing imp as that? Oh, he's a dreadful fellow!"

The raven, with his head very much on one side, and his bright eye shining like a diamond, preserved a thoughtful silence for a few seconds, and then replied in a voice so hoarse and distant, that it seemed to come through his thick feathers rather than out of his mouth:

"Halloa, halloa, halloa! What's the matter here? Keep up your spirits. Never say die. Bow, wow, wow. I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil. Hurrah!"—And then, as if exulting in his infernal character, he began to whistle.

"I more than half believe he speaks the truth. Upon my word I do," said Varden. "Do you see how he looks at me, as if he knew what I was saying?"

To which the bird, balancing himself on tip-toe, as it were, and moving his body up and down in a sort of grave dance, rejoined, "I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil," and flapped his wings against his sides as if he were bursting with laughter. Barnaby clapped his hands, and fairly rolled upon the ground in an ecstasy of delight.

"Strange companions, sir," said the locksmith, shaking his head, and looking from one to the other. "The bird has all the wit."

"Strange indeed!" said Edward, holding out

his forefinger to the raven, who, in acknowledgment of the attention, made a dive at it immediately with his iron bill. "Is he old?"

"A mere boy, sir," replied the locksmith. "A hundred and twenty, or thereabouts. Call him down, Barnaby, my man."

"Call him!" echoed Barnaby, sitting upright upon the floor, and staring vacantly at Gabriel, as he thrust his hair back from his face. "But who can make him come? He calls me, and makes me go where he will. He goes on before, and I follow. He's the master, and I'm the man. Is that the truth, Grip?"

The raven gave a short, comfortable, confidential kind of croak—a most expressive croak, which seemed to say, "You needn't let these fellows into our secrets. We understand each other. It's all right."

"I make *him* come!" cried Barnaby, pointing to the bird. "Him, who never goes to sleep, or so much as winks!—Why, any time of night, you may see his eyes in my dark room, shining like two sparks. And every night, and all night too, he's broad awake, talking to himself, thinking what he shall do to-morrow, where we shall go, and what he shall steal, and hide, and bury. I make *him* come! Ha, ha, ha!"

On second thoughts, the bird appeared disposed to come of himself. After a short survey of the ground, and a few sidelong looks at the ceiling and at everybody present in turn, he fluttered to the floor, and went to Barnaby—not in a hop, or walk, or run, but in a pace like that of a very particular gentleman with exceedingly tight boots on, trying to walk fast over loose pebbles. Then, stepping into his extended hand, and condescending to be held out at arm's length, he gave vent to a succession of sounds, not unlike the drawing of some eight or ten dozen of long corks, and again asserted his brimstone birth and parentage with great distinctness.

The locksmith shook his head—perhaps in some doubt of the creature's being really nothing but a bird—perhaps in pity for Barnaby, who by this time had him in his arms, and was rolling about with him on the ground. As he raised his eyes from the poor fellow, he encountered those of his mother, who had entered the room, and was looking on in silence.

She was quite white in the face, even to her lips, but had wholly subdued her emotion, and wore her usual quiet look. Varden fancied as he glanced at her that she shrunk from his eye; and that she busied herself about the wounded gentleman to avoid him the better.

It was time he went to bed, she said. He

was to be removed to his own home on the morrow, and he had already exceeded his time for sitting up by a full hour. Acting on this hint, the locksmith prepared to take his leave.

"By-the-bye," said Edward as he shook him by the hand, and looked from him to Mrs. Rudge and back again, "what noise was that below? I heard your voice in the midst of it, and should have inquired before, but our other conversation drove it from my memory. What was it?"

The locksmith looked towards her, and bit his lip. She leant against the chair, and bent her eyes upon the ground. Barnaby too—he was listening.

"Some mad or drunken fellow, sir," Varden at length made answer, looking steadily at the widow as he spoke. "He mistook the house, and tried to force an entrance."

She breathed more freely, but stood quite motionless. As the locksmith said "Good night," and Barnaby caught up the candle to light him down the stairs, she took it from him, and charged him—with more haste and earnestness than so slight an occasion appeared to warrant—not to stir. The raven followed them to satisfy himself that all was right below, and when they reached the street-door, stood on the bottom stair drawing corks out of number.

With a trembling hand she unfastened the chain and bolts and turned the key. As she had her hand upon the latch, the locksmith said in a low voice,

"I have told a lie to-night for your sake, Mary, and for the sake of bygone times and old acquaintance, when I would scorn to do so for my own. I hope I may have done no harm, or led to none. I can't help the suspicions you have forced upon me, and I am loath, I tell you plainly, to leave Mr. Edward here. Take care he comes to no hurt. I doubt the safety of this roof, and am glad he leaves it so soon. Now let me go."

For a moment she hid her face in her hands and wept; but, resisting the strong impulse which evidently moved her to reply, opened the door—no wider than was sufficient for the passage of his body—and motioned him away. As the locksmith stood upon the step, it was chained and locked behind him, and the raven, in furtherance of these precautions, barked like a lusty house-dog.

"In league with that ill-looking figure that might have fallen from a gibbet—he listening and hiding here—Barnaby first upon the spot last night—can she who has always borne so fair a name be guilty of such crimes in secret?"

said the locksmith, musing. "Heaven forgive me if I am wrong, and send me just thoughts; but she is poor, the temptation may be great, and we daily hear of things as strange.—Ay, bark away, my friend. If there's any wickedness going on, that raven's in it, I'll be sworn."

## CHAPTER VII.

**M**RS. VARDEN was a lady of what is commonly called an uncertain temper—a phrase which, being interpreted, signifies a temper tolerably certain to make everybody more or less uncomfortable. Thus it generally happened that when other people were merry, Mrs. Varden was dull; and that when other people were dull, Mrs. Varden was disposed to be amazingly cheerful. Indeed, the worthy housewife was of such a capricious nature, that she not only attained a higher pitch of genius than Macbeth, in respect of her ability to be wise, amazed, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral in an instant, but would sometimes ring the changes backwards and forwards on all possible moods and flights in one short quarter of an hour; performing, as it were, a kind of triple bob major on the peal of instruments in the female belfry, with a skilfulness and rapidity of execution that astonished all who heard her.

It had been observed in this good lady (who did not want for personal attractions, being plump and buxom to look at, though, like her fair daughter, somewhat short in stature) that this uncertainty of disposition strengthened and increased with her temporal prosperity; and divers wise men and matrons on friendly terms with the locksmith and his family even went so far as to assert, that a tumble-down some half-dozen rounds in the world's ladder—such as the breaking of the bank in which her husband kept his money, or some little fall of that kind—would be the making of her, and could hardly fail to render her one of the most agreeable companions in existence. Whether they were right or wrong in this conjecture, certain it is that minds, like bodies, will often fall into a pimpled ill-conditioned state from mere excess of comfort, and, like them, are often successfully cured by remedies in themselves very nauseous and unpalatable.

Mrs. Varden's chief aider and abettor, and at the same time her principal victim and object of wrath, was her single domestic servant, one Miss Miggs; or, as she was called, in conformity



with those prejudices of society which lop and top from poor handmaidens all such genteel excrescences—Miggs. This Miggs was a tall young lady, very much addicted to pattens in private life; slender and shrewish, of a rather uncomfortable figure, and, though not absolutely ill-looking, of a sharp and acid visage. As a general principle and abstract proposition, Miggs held the male sex to be utterly contemptible and unworthy of notice; to be fickle, false, base, sottish, inclined to perjury, and wholly undeserving. When particularly exasperated against them (which, scandal said, was when Sim Tappertit slighted her most), she was accustomed to wish with great emphasis that the whole race of women could but die off, in order that the men might be brought to know the real value of the blessings by which they set so little store; nay, her feeling for her order ran so high, that she sometimes declared, if she could only have good security for a fair, round number—say ten thousand—of young virgins following her example, she would, to spite mankind, hang, drown, stab, or poison herself, with a joy past all expression.

It was the voice of Miggs that greeted the locksmith, when he knocked at his own house, with a shrill cry of "Who's there?"

"Me, girl, me," returned Gabriel.

"What, already, sir!" said Miggs, opening the door with a look of surprise. "We was just getting on our nightcaps to sit up—me and mistress. Oh, she has been *so* bad!"

Miggs said this with an air of uncommon candour and concern; but the parlour door was standing open, and, as Gabriel very well knew for whose ears it was designed, he regarded her with anything but an approving look as he passed in.

"Master's come home, mim," cried Miggs, running before him into the parlour. "You was wrong, mim, and I was right. I thought he wouldn't keep us up so late two nights running, mim. Master's always considerate so far. I'm so glad, mim, on your account. I'm a little"—here Miggs simpered—"a little sleepy myself; I'll own it now, mim, though I said I wasn't when you asked me. It an't of no consequence, mim, of course."

"You had better," said the locksmith, who most devoutly wished that Barnaby's raven was at Miggs's ankles, "you had better get to bed at once then."

"Thanking you kindly, sir," returned Miggs, "I couldn't take my rest in peace, nor fix my thoughts upon my prayers, otherways than that I knew mistress was comfortable in her bed this

night; by rights she should have been there hours ago."

"You're talkative, mistress," said Varden, pulling off his great-coat, and looking at her askew.

"Taking the hint, sir," cried Miggs, with a flushed face, "and thanking you for it most kindly, I will make bold to say, that if I give offence by having consideration for my mistress, I do not ask your pardon, but am content to get myself into trouble, and to be in suffering."

Here Mrs. Varden, who, with her countenance shrouded in a large nightcap, had been all this time intent upon the Protestant Manual, looked round, and acknowledged Miggs's championship by commanding her to hold her tongue.

Every little bone in Miggs's throat and neck developed itself with a spitefulness quite alarming, as she replied, "Yes, mim, I will."

"How do you find yourself now, my dear?" said the locksmith, taking a chair near his wife (who had resumed her book), and rubbing his knees hard as he made the inquiry.

"You're very anxious to know, an't you?" returned Mrs. Varden, with her eyes upon the print. "You, that have not been near me all day, and wouldn't have been if I was dying!"

"My dear Martha——" said Gabriel.

Mrs. Varden turned over to the next page; then went back again to the bottom line overleaf to be quite sure of the last words, and then went on reading with an appearance of the deepest interest and study.

"My dear Martha," said the locksmith, "how can you say such things, when you know you don't mean them? If you were dying! Why, if there was anything serious the matter with you, Martha, shouldn't I be in constant attendance upon you?"

"Yes!" cried Mrs. Varden, bursting into tears, "yes, you would. I don't doubt it, Varden. Certainly you would. That's as much as to tell me that you would be hovering round me like a vulture, waiting till the breath was out of my body, that you might go and marry somebody else."

Miggs groaned in sympathy—a little short groan, checked in its birth, and changed into a cough. It seemed to say, "I can't help it. It's wrung from me by the dreadful brutality of that monster master."

"But you'll break my heart one of these days," added Mrs. Varden with more resignation, "and then we shall both be happy. My only desire is to see Dolly comfortably settled, and when she is you may settle *me* as soon as you like."



"Ah!" cried Miggs—and coughed again.

Poor Gabriel twisted his wig about in silence for a long time, and then said mildly, "Has Dolly gone to bed?"

"Your master speaks to you," said Mrs. Varden, looking sternly over her shoulder at Miss Miggs in waiting.

"No, my dear, I spoke to you," suggested the locksmith.

"Did you hear me, Miggs?" cried the obdurate lady, stamping her foot upon the ground. "You are beginning to despise me now, are you? But this is example!"

At this cruel rebuke, Miggs, whose tears were always ready, for large or small parties, on the shortest notice and the most reasonable terms, fell a crying violently; holding both her hands tight upon her heart meanwhile, as if nothing less would prevent its splitting into small fragments. Mrs. Varden, who likewise possessed that faculty in high perfection, wept too, against Miggs; and with such effect that Miggs gave in after a time, and, except for an occasional sob, which seemed to threaten some remote intention of breaking out again, left her mistress in possession of the field. Her superiority being thoroughly asserted, that lady soon desisted likewise, and fell into a quiet melancholy.

The relief was so great, and the fatiguing occurrences of last night so completely overpowered the locksmith, that he nodded in his chair, and would doubtless have slept there all night, but for the voice of Mrs. Varden, which, after a pause of some five minutes, awoke him with a start.

"If I am ever," said Mrs. V.—not scolding, but in a sort of monotonous remonstrance—"in spirits, if I am ever cheerful, if I am ever more than usually disposed to be talkative and comfortable, this is the way I am treated."

"Such spirits as you was in too, mim, but half an hour ago!" cried Miggs. "I never see such company!"

"Because," said Mrs. Varden, "because I never interfere or interrupt, because I never question where anybody comes or goes; because my whole mind and soul is bent on saving where I can save, and labouring in this house—therefore, they try me as they do."

"Martha," urged the locksmith, endeavouring to look as wakeful as possible, "what is it you complain of? I really came home with every wish and desire to be happy. I did, indeed."

"What do I complain of?" retorted his wife. "Is it a chilling thing to have one's husband sulking and falling asleep directly he comes home—to have him freezing all one's warm-

heartedness, and throwing cold water over the fireside? Is it natural, when I know he went out upon a matter in which I am as much interested as anybody can be, that I should wish to know all that has happened, or that he should tell me without my begging and praying him to do it? Is that natural, or is it not?"

"I am very sorry, Martha," said the good-natured locksmith. "I was really afraid you were not disposed to talk pleasantly; I'll tell you everything; I shall only be too glad, my dear."

"No, Varden," returned his wife, rising with dignity. "I dare say—thank you! I'm not a child to be corrected one minute and petted the next—I'm a little too old for that, Varden. Miggs, carry the light. You can be cheerful, Miggs, at least."

Miggs, who, to this moment, had been in the very depths of compassionate despondency, passed instantly into the liveliest state conceivable, and tossing her head as she glanced towards the locksmith, bore off her mistress and the light together.

"Now, who would think," thought Varden, shrugging his shoulders and drawing his chair nearer to the fire, "that that woman could ever be pleasant and agreeable? And yet she can be. Well, well, all of us have our faults. I'll not be hard upon hers. We have been man and wife too long for that."

He dozed again—not the less pleasantly, perhaps, for his hearty temper. While his eyes were closed, the door leading to the upper stairs was partially opened; and a head appeared, which, at sight of him, hastily drew back again.

"I wish," murmured Gabriel, waking at the noise, and looking round the room, "I wish somebody would marry Miggs. But that's impossible! I wonder whether there's any madman alive who would marry Miggs!"

This was such a vast speculation that he fell into a doze again, and slept until the fire was quite burnt out. At last he roused himself; and having double-locked the street-door according to custom, and put the key in his pocket, went off to bed.

He had not left the room in darkness many minutes, when the head again appeared, and Sim Tappertit entered, bearing in his hand a little lamp.

"What the devil business has he to stop up so late?" muttered Sim, passing into the workshop, and setting it down upon the forge. "Here's half the night gone already. There's only one good that has ever come to me out of this cursed old rusty mechanical trade, and that's this piece of ironmongery, upon my soul!"

As he spoke, he drew from the right hand, or rather right leg pocket of his smalls a clumsy large-sized key, which he inserted cautiously in the lock his master had secured, and softly opened the door. That done, he replaced his piece of secret workmanship in his pocket; and leaving the lamp burning, and closing the door carefully and without noise, stole out into the street—as little suspected by the locksmith, in his sound deep sleep, as by Barnaby himself in his phantom-haunted dreams.

## CHAPTER VIII.



LEAR of the locksmith's house, Sim Tappertit laid aside his cautious manner, and assuming in its stead that of a ruffling, swaggering, roving blade, who would rather kill a man than otherwise, and eat him too if needful, made the best of his way along the darkened streets.

Half pausing for an instant now and then to smite his pocket and assure himself of the safety of his master key, he hurried on to Barbican, and turning into one of the narrowest of the narrow streets which diverged from that centre, slackened his pace and wiped his heated brow, as if the termination of his walk were near at hand.

It was not a very choice spot for midnight expeditions, being in truth one of more than questionable character, and of an appearance by no means inviting. From the main street he had entered, itself little better than an alley, a low-browed doorway led into a blind court or yard, profoundly dark, unpaved, and reeking with stagnant odours. Into this ill-favoured pit the locksmith's vagrant 'prentice groped his way; and stopping at a house from whose defaced and rotten front the rude effigy of a bottle swung to and fro like some gibbeted malefactor, struck thrice upon an iron grating with his foot. After listening in vain for some response to his signal, Mr. Tappertit became impatient, and struck the grating thrice again.

A further delay ensued, but it was not of long duration. The ground seemed to open at his feet, and a ragged head appeared.

"Is that the captain?" said a voice as ragged as the head.

"Yes," replied Mr. Tappertit haughtily, descending as he spoke, "who should it be?"

"It's so late, we gave you up," returned the voice, as its owner stopped to shut and fasten the grating. "You're late, sir."

"Lead on," said Mr. Tappertit with a gloomy majesty, "and make remarks when I require you. Forward!"

This latter word of command was perhaps somewhat theatrical and unnecessary, inasmuch as the descent was by a very narrow, steep, and slippery flight of steps, and any rashness or departure from the beaten track must have ended in a yawning water-butt. But Mr. Tappertit being, like some other great commanders, favourable to strong effects and personal display, cried "Forward!" again, in the hoarsest voice he could assume; and led the way, with folded arms and knitted brows, to the cellar down below, where there was a small copper fixed in one corner, a chair or two, a form and table, a glimmering fire, and a truckle-bed, covered with a ragged patchwork rug.

"Welcome, noble captain!" cried a lanky figure, rising as from a nap.

The captain nodded. Then, throwing off his outer coat, he stood composed in all his dignity, and eyed his follower over.

"What news to-night?" he asked, when he had looked into his very soul.

"Nothing particular," replied the other, stretching himself—and he was so long already that it was quite alarming to see him do it. "How come you to be so late?"

"No matter," was all the captain deigned to say in answer. "Is the room prepared?"

"It is," replied his follower.

"The comrade—is he here?"

"Yes. And a sprinkling of the others—you hear 'em?"

"Playing skittles!" said the captain moodily. "Light-hearted revellers!"

There was no doubt respecting the particular amusement in which these heedless spirits were indulging, for even in the close and stifling atmosphere of the vault, the noise sounded like distant thunder. It certainly appeared, at first sight, a singular spot to choose, for that or any other purpose of relaxation, if the other cellars answered to the one in which this brief colloquy took place; for the floors were of sodden earth, the walls and roof of damp bare brick tapestried with the tracks of snails and slugs; the air was sickening, tainted, and offensive. It seemed, from one strong flavour which was uppermost among the various odours of the place, that it had, at no very distant period, been used as a storehouse for cheeses; a circumstance which, while it accounted for the greasy moisture that hung about it, was agreeably suggestive of rats. It was naturally damp besides, and little trees of fungus sprung from every mouldering corner.



The proprietor of this charming retreat, and owner of the ragged head before mentioned—for he wore an old tie-wig as bare and frouzy as a stunted hearth-broom—had by this time joined them; and stood a little apart, rubbing his

hands, wagging his hoary bristled chin, and smiling in silence. His eyes were closed; but had they been wide open, it would have been easy to tell, from the attentive expression of the face he turned towards them—pale and unwhole-



"IF I AM EVER," SAID MRS. V.—NOT SCOLDING, BUT IN A SORT OF MONOTONOUS REMONSTRANCE—"IN SPIRITS, IF I AM EVER CHEERFUL, IF I AM EVER MORE THAN USUALLY DISPOSED TO BE TALKATIVE AND COMFORTABLE, THIS IS THE WAY I AM TREATED."

some, as might be expected, in one of his underground existence—and from a certain anxious raising and quivering of the lids, that he was blind.

"Even Stag had been asleep," said the long comrade, nodding towards this person.

"Sound, captain, sound!" cried the blind man. "What does my noble captain drink—is it brandy, rum, usquebaugh? Is it soaked gunpowder, or blazing oil? Give it a name, heart of oak, and we'd get it for you, if it was wine



from a bishop's cellar, or melted gold from King George's mint."

"See," said Mr. Tappertit haughtily, "that it's something strong, and comes quick; and so long as you take care of that, you may bring it from the devil's cellar, if you like."

"Boldly said, noble captain!" rejoined the blind man. "Spoken like the 'Prentices' Glory. Ha, ha! From the devil's cellar! A brave joke! The captain joketh. Ha, ha, ha!"

"I'll tell you what, my fine feller," said Mr. Tappertit, eyeing the host over as he walked to a closet, and took out a bottle and glass as carelessly as if he had been in full possession of his sight, "if you make that row, you'll find that the captain's very far from joking, and so I tell you."

"He's got his eyes on me!" cried Stagg, stopping short on his way back, and affecting to screen his face with the bottle. "I feel 'em, though I can't see 'em. Take 'em off, noble captain. Remove 'em, for they pierce like gimlets."

Mr. Tappertit smiled grimly at his comrade; and twisting out one more look—a kind of ocular screw—under the influence of which the blind man feigned to undergo great anguish and torture, bade him, in a softened tone, approach, and hold his peace.

"I obey you, captain," cried Stagg, drawing close to him and filling out a bumper without spilling a drop, by reason that he held his little finger at the brim of the glass, and stopped at the instant the liquor touched it; "drink, noble governor. Death to all masters, life to all 'prentices, and love to all fair damsels. Drink, brave general, and warm your gallant heart!"

Mr. Tappertit condescended to take the glass from his outstretched hand. Stagg then dropped on one knee, and gently smoothed the calves of his legs, with an air of humble admiration.

"That I had but eyes!" he cried, "to behold my captain's symmetrical proportions! That I had but eyes to look upon these twin invaders of domestic peace!"

"Get out!" said Mr. Tappertit, glancing downward at his favourite limbs. "Go along, will you, Stagg?"

"When I touch my own afterwards," cried the host, smiting them reproachfully, "I hate 'em. Comparatively speaking, they've no more shape than wooden legs beside these models of my noble captain's."

"Yours!" exclaimed Mr. Tappertit. "No, I should think not. Don't talk about those precious old toothpicks in the same breath with mine; that's rather too much. Here. Take the glass. Benjamin. Lead on. To business!"

With these words, he folded his arms again; and frowning with a sullen majesty, passed with his companion through a little door at the upper end of the cellar, and disappeared, leaving Stagg to his private meditations.

The vault they entered, strewn with sawdust and dimly lighted, was between the outer one from which they had just come, and that in which the skittle players were diverting themselves; as was manifested by the increased noise and clamour of tongues, which was suddenly stopped, however, and replaced by a dead silence, at a signal from the long comrade. Then, this young gentleman, going to a little cupboard, returned with a thigh-bone, which in former times must have been part and parcel of some individual at least as long as himself, and placed the same in the hands of Mr. Tappertit; who, receiving it as a sceptre and staff of authority, cocked his three-cornered hat fiercely on the top of his head, and mounted a large table, whereon a chair of state, cheerfully ornamented with a couple of skulls, was placed ready for his reception.

He had no sooner assumed this position than another young gentleman appeared, bearing in his arms a huge clasped book, who made him a profound obeisance, and delivering it to the long comrade, advanced to the table, and turning his back upon it, stood there Atlas-wise. Then, the long comrade got upon the table too; and seating himself in a lower chair than Mr. Tappertit's, with much state and ceremony, placed the large book on the shoulders of their mute companion as deliberately as if he had been a wooden desk, and prepared to make entries therein with a pen of corresponding size.

When the long comrade had made these preparations, he looked towards Mr. Tappertit; and Mr. Tappertit, flourishing the bone, knocked nine times therewith upon one of the skulls. At the ninth stroke, a third young gentleman emerged from the door leading to the skittle-ground, and bowing low, awaited his commands.

"'Prentice!" said the mighty captain, "who waits without?"

The 'prentice made answer that a stranger was in attendance, who claimed admission into that secret society of 'Prentice Knights, and a free participation in their rights, privileges, and immunities. Thereupon Mr. Tappertit flourished the bone again, and giving the other skull a prodigious rap on the nose, exclaimed "Admit him!" At these dread words the 'prentice bowed once more, and so withdrew as he had come.

There soon appeared at the same door two other 'prentices, having between them a third, whose eyes were bandaged, and who was attired in a bag-wig, and a broad-skirted coat, trimmed with tarnished lace; and who was girded with a sword, in compliance with the laws of the Institution regulating the introduction of candidates, which required them to assume this courtly dress, and kept it constantly in lavender, for their convenience. One of the conductors of this novice held a rusty blunderbuss pointed towards his ear, and the other a very ancient sabre, with which he carved imaginary offenders as he came along in a sanguinary and anatomical manner.

As this silent group advanced, Mr. Tappertit fixed his hat upon his head. The novice then laid his hand upon his breast and bent before him. When he had humbled himself sufficiently, the captain ordered the bandage to be removed, and proceeded to eye him over.

"Ha!" said the captain thoughtfully, when he had concluded this ordeal. "Proceed."

The long comrade read aloud as follows:—"Mark Gilbert. Age, nineteen. Bound to Thomas Curzon, hosier, Golden Fleece, Aldgate. Loves Curzon's daughter. Cannot say that Curzon's daughter loves him. Should think it probable. Curzon pulled his ears last Tuesday week."

"How!" cried the captain, starting.

"For looking at his daughter, please you," said the novice.

"Write Curzon down, Denounced," said the captain. "Put a black cross against the name of Curzon."

"So please you," said the novice, "that's not the worst—he calls his 'prentice idle dog, and stops his beer unless he works to his liking. He gives Dutch cheese, too, eating Cheshire, sir, himself; and Sundays out are only once a month."

"This," said Mr. Tappertit gravely, "is a flagrant case. Put two black crosses to the name of Curzon."

"If the society," said the novice, who was an ill-looking, one-sided, shambling lad, with sunken eyes set close together in his head—"if the society would burn his house down—for he's not insured—or beat him as he comes home from his club at night, or help me to carry off his daughter, and marry her at the Fleet, whether she gave consent or no—"

Mr. Tappertit waved his grizzly truncheon as an admonition to him not to interrupt, and ordered three black crosses to the name of Curzon.

"Which means," he said in gracious explana-

tion, "vengeance, complete and terrible. 'Prentice, do you love the Constitution?"

To which the novice (being to that end instructed by his attendant sponsors) replied, "I do!"

"The Church, the State, and everything established—but the masters?" quoth the captain.

Again the novice said, "I do."

Having said it, he listened meekly to the captain, who, in an address prepared for such occasions, told him how that under that same Constitution (which was kept in a strong box somewhere, but where exactly he could not find out, or he would have endeavoured to procure a copy of it), the 'prentices had, in times gone by, had frequent holidays of right, broken people's heads by scores, defied their masters, nay, even achieved some glorious murders in the streets, which privileges had gradually been wrested from them, and in all which noble aspirations they were now restrained; how the degrading checks imposed upon them were unquestionably attributable to the innovating spirit of the times, and how they united, therefore, to resist all change, except such change as would restore those good old English customs, by which they would stand or fall. After illustrating the wisdom of going backward by reference to that sagacious fish, the crab, and the not unfrequent practice of the mule and donkey, he described their general objects: which were briefly vengeance on their Tyrant Masters (of whose grievous and insupportable oppression no 'prentice could entertain a moment's doubt), and the restoration, as aforesaid, of their ancient rights and holidays; for neither of which objects were they now quite ripe, being barely twenty strong, but which they pledged themselves to pursue with fire and sword when needful. Then he described the oath which every member of that small remnant of a noble body took, and which was of a dreadful and impressive kind; binding him, at the bidding of his chief, to resist and obstruct the Lord Mayor, sword-bearer, and chaplain; to despise the authority of the sheriffs; and to hold the Court of Aldermen as nought; but not on any account, in case the fulness of time should bring a general rising of 'prentices, to damage or in any way disfigure Temple Bar, which was strictly constitutional, and always to be approached with reverence. Having gone over these several heads with great eloquence and force, and having further informed the novice that this society had had its origin in his own teeming brain, stimulated by a swelling sense of wrong and outrage, Mr. Tappertit demanded whether he had strength of heart to



take the mighty pledge required, or whether he would withdraw while retreat was yet within his power.

To this the novice made rejoinder that he would take the vow, though it should choke him; and it was accordingly administered with many impressive circumstances, among which the lighting up of the two skulls with a candle-end inside of each, and a great many flourishes with the bone, were chiefly conspicuous; not to mention a variety of grave exercises with the blunderbuss and sabre, and some dismal groaning by unseen 'prentices without. All these dark and direful ceremonies being at length completed, the table was put aside, the chair of state removed, the sceptre locked up in its usual cupboard, the doors of communication between the three cellars thrown freely open, and the 'Prentice Knights resigned themselves to merriment.

But Mr. Tappertit, who had a soul above the vulgar herd, and who, on account of his greatness, could only afford to be merry now and then, threw himself on a bench with the air of a man who was faint with dignity. He looked with an indifferent eye, alike on skittles, cards, and dice, thinking only of the locksmith's daughter, and the base degenerate days on which he had fallen.

"My noble captain neither games, nor sings, nor dances," said his host, taking a seat beside him. "Drink, gallant general!"

Mr. Tappertit drained the proffered goblet to the dregs; then thrust his hands into his pockets, and with a lowering visage walked among the skittles, while his followers (such is the influence of superior genius) restrained the ardent ball, and held his little shins in dumb respect.

"If I had been born a corsair or a pirate, a brigand, genteel highwayman, or patriot,—and they're the same thing," thought Mr. Tappertit, musing among the nine-pins,—"I should have been all right. But to drag out a ignoble existence unbeknown to mankind in general—Patience! I will be famous yet. A voice within me keeps on whispering Greatness. I shall burst out one of these days, and when I do, what power can keep me down? I feel my soul getting into my head at the idea. More drink there!"

"The novice," pursued Mr. Tappertit, not exactly in a voice of thunder, for his tones, to say the truth, were rather cracked and shrill,—but very impressively, notwithstanding—"where is he?"

"Here, noble captain!" cried Stagg. "One stands beside me who I feel is a stranger."

"Have you," said Mr. Tappertit, letting his

gaze fall on the party indicated, who was indeed the new knight, by this time restored to his own apparel; "have you the impression of your street-door key in wax?"

The long comrade anticipated the reply by producing it from the shelf on which it had been deposited.

"Good," said Mr. Tappertit, scrutinising it attentively, while a breathless silence reigned around; for he had constructed secret door-keys for the whole society, and perhaps owed something of his influence to that mean and trivial circumstance—on such slight accidents do even men of mind depend!—"This is easily made. Come hither, friend."

With that he beckoned the new knight apart, and putting the pattern in his pocket, motioned to him to walk by his side.

"And so," he said, when they had taken a few turns up and down, "you—you love your master's daughter?"

"I do," said the 'prentice. "Honour bright. No chaff, you know."

"Have you," rejoined Mr. Tappertit, catching him by the wrist, and giving him a look which would have been expressive of the most deadly malevolence, but for an accidental hiccup that rather interfered with it; "have you a—a rival?"

"Not as I know on," replied the 'prentice.

"If you had now"—said Mr. Tappertit—"what would you—eh?"

The 'prentice looked fierce and clenched his fists.

"It is enough," cried Mr. Tappertit hastily; "we understand each other. We are observed. I thank you."

So saying, he cast him off again; and calling the long comrade aside after taking a few hasty turns by himself, bade him immediately write and post against the wall a notice, proscribing one Joseph Willet (commonly known as Joe) of Chigwell; forbidding all 'Prentice Knights to succour, comfort, or hold communion with him; and requiring them, on pain of excommunication, to molest, hurt, wrong, annoy, and pick quarrels with the said Joseph, whensoever and wheresoever they, or any of them, should happen to encounter him.

Having relieved his mind by this energetic proceeding, he condescended to approach the festive board, and warming by degrees, at length deigned to preside, and even to enchant the company with a song. After this, he rose to such a pitch as to consent to regale the society with a hornpipe, which he actually performed to the music of a fiddle (played by an ingenious member), with such surpassing agility and



brilliance of execution, that the spectators could not be sufficiently enthusiastic in their admiration; and their host protested, with tears in his eyes, that he had never truly felt his blindness until that moment.

But the host withdrawing—probably to weep in secret—soon returned with the information that it wanted little more than an hour of day, and that all the cocks in Barbican had already begun to crow, as if their lives depended on it. At this intelligence, the 'Prentice Knights arose in haste, and marshalling into a line, filed off one by one, and dispersed with all speed to their several homes, leaving their leader to pass the grating last.

"Good night, noble captain," whispered the blind man as he held it open for his passage out. "Farewell, brave general. Bye, bye, illustrious commander. Good luck go with you for a—conceited, bragging, empty-headed, duck-legged idiot."

With which parting words, coolly added as he listened to his receding footsteps and locked the grate upon himself, he descended the steps, and lighting the fire below the little copper, prepared, without any assistance, for his daily occupation; which was to retail at the area-head above pennyworths of broth and soup, and savoury puddings, compounded of such scraps as were to be bought in the heap for the least money at Fleet Market in the evening-time; and for the sale of which he had need to have depended chiefly on his private connection, for the court had no thoroughfare, and was not that kind of place in which many people were likely to take the air, or to frequent as an agreeable promenade.

## CHAPTER IX.

**C**HRONICLERS are privileged to enter where they list, to come and go through keyholes, to ride upon the wind, to overcome, in their soarings up and down, all obstacles of distance, time, and place. Thrice blessed be this last consideration, since it enables us to follow the disdainful Miggs even into the sanctity of her chamber, and to hold her in sweet companionship through the dreary watches of the night!

Miss Miggs, having undone her mistress, as she phrased it (which means, assisted to undress her), and having seen her comfortably to bed in the back-room on the first floor, withdrew to her own apartment in the attic story. Notwithstand-

ing her declaration in the locksmith's presence, she was in no mood for sleep; so, putting her light upon the table and withdrawing the little window curtain, she gazed out pensively at the wild night sky.

Perhaps she wondered what star was destined for her habitation when she had run her little course below; perhaps speculated which of those glimmering spheres might be the natal orb of Mr. Tappertit; perhaps marvelled how they could gaze down on that perfidious creature, man, and not sicken and turn green as chemists' lamps; perhaps thought of nothing in particular. Whatever she thought about, there she sat, until her attention, alive to anything connected with the insinuating 'prentice, was attracted by a noise in the next room to her own—his room; the room in which he slept, and dreamed—it might be, sometimes dreamed of her.

That he was not dreaming now, unless he was taking a walk in his sleep, was clear, for every now and then there came a shuffling noise, as though he were engaged in polishing the white-washed wall; then a gentle creaking of his door; then the faintest indication of his stealthy footsteps on the landing-place outside. Noting this latter circumstance, Miss Miggs turned pale and shuddered, as mistrusting his intentions; and more than once exclaimed, below her breath, "Oh! what a Providence it is as I am bolted in!"—which, owing doubtless to her alarm, was a confusion of ideas on her part between a bolt and its use; for though there was one on the door, it was not fastened.

Miss Miggs's sense of hearing, however, having as sharp an edge as her temper, and being of the same snappish and suspicious kind, very soon informed her that the footsteps passed her door, and appeared to have some object quite separate and disconnected from herself. At this discovery she became more alarmed than ever, and was about to give utterance to those cries of "Thieves!" and "Murder!" which she had hitherto restrained, when it occurred to her to look softly out, and see that her fears had some good palpable foundation.

Looking out accordingly, and stretching her neck over the handrail, she descried, to her great amazement, Mr. Tappertit completely dressed, stealing down-stairs one step at a time, with his shoes in one hand and a lamp in the other. Following him with her eyes, and going down a little way herself to get the better of an intervening angle, she beheld him thrust his head in at the parlour door, draw it back again with great swiftness, and immediately begin a retreat up-stairs with all possible expedition.

"Here's mysteries!" said the damsel, when she was safe in her own room again, quite out of breath. "Oh gracious, here's mysteries!"

The prospect of finding anybody out in anything would have kept Miss Miggs awake under the influence of henbane. Presently she heard the step again, as she would have done if it had been that of a feather endowed with motion and walking down on tiptoe. Then, gliding out as before, she again beheld the retreating figure of the 'prentice; again he looked cautiously in at the parlour door, but this time, instead of retreating, he passed in and disappeared.

Miggs was back in her room, and had her head out of the window, before an elderly gentleman could have winked and recovered from it. Out he came at the street-door, shut it carefully behind him, tried it with his knee, and swaggered off, putting something in his pocket as he went along. At this spectacle Miggs cried "Gracious!" again, and then, "Goodness gracious!" and then, "Goodness gracious me!" and then, candle in hand, went down-stairs as he had done. Coming to the workshop, she saw the lamp burning on the forge, and everything as Sim had left it.

"Why, I wish I may only have a walking funeral, and never be buried decent with a mourning coach and feathers, if the boy hasn't been and made a key for his own self!" cried Miggs. "Oh the little villain!"

This conclusion was not arrived at without consideration, and much peeping and peering about; nor was it unassisted by the recollection that she had on several occasions come upon the 'prentice suddenly, and found him busy at some mysterious occupation. Lest the fact of Miss Miggs calling him, on whom she stooped to cast a favourable eye, a boy, should create surprise in any breast, it may be observed that she invariably affected to regard all male bipeds under thirty as mere chits and infants; which phenomenon is not unusual in ladies of Miss Miggs's temper, and is, indeed, generally found to be the associate of such indomitable and savage virtue.

Miss Miggs deliberated within herself for some little time, looking hard at the shop-door while she did so, as though her eyes and thoughts were both upon it; and then, taking a sheet of paper from a drawer, twisted it into a long thin spiral tube. Having filled this instrument with a quantity of small coal dust from the forge, she approached the door, and dropping on one knee before it, dexterously blew into the keyhole as much of these fine ashes as the lock would hold. When she had filled it to the brim in a very

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workmanlike and skilful manner, she crept up-stairs again, and chuckled as she went.

"There!" cried Miggs, rubbing her hands, "now let's see whether you won't be glad to take some notice of me, mister. He, he, he! You'll have eyes for somebody besides Miss Dolly now, I think. A fat-faced puss she is, as ever I come across!"

As she uttered this criticism, she glanced approvingly at her small mirror, as who should say, I thank my stars that can't be said of me—as it certainly could not; for Miss Miggs's style of beauty was of that kind which Mr. Tappertit himself had not inaptly termed, in private, "scraggy."

"I don't go to bed this night!" said Miggs, wrapping herself in a shawl, and drawing a couple of chairs near the window, flouncing down upon one, and putting her feet upon the other, "till you come home, my lad. I wouldn't," said Miggs viciously, "no, not for five-and-forty pound!"

With that, and with an expression of face in which a great number of opposite ingredients, such as mischief, cunning, malice, triumph, and patient expectation, were all mixed up together in a kind of physiognomical punch, Miss Miggs composed herself to wait and listen, like some fair ogress who had set a trap and was watching for a nibble from a plump young traveller.

She sat there, with perfect composure, all night. At length, just upon break of day, there was a footstep in the street, and presently she could hear Mr. Tappertit stop at the door. Then she could make out that he tried his key—that he was blowing into it—that he knocked it on the nearest post to beat the dust out—that he took it under a lamp to look at it—that he poked bits of stick into the lock to clear it—that he peeped into the keyhole, first with one eye, and then with the other—that he tried the key again—that he couldn't turn it, and, what was worse, couldn't get it out—that he bent it—that then it was much less disposed to come out than before—that he gave it a mighty twist and a great pull, and then it came out so suddenly that he staggered backwards—that he kicked the door—that he shook it—finally, that he smote his forehead, and sat down on the step in despair.

When this crisis had arrived, Miss Miggs, affecting to be exhausted with terror, and to cling to the window-sill for support, put out her nightcap, and demanded in a faint voice who was there.

Mr. Tappertit cried "Hush!" and, backing into the road, exhorted her in frenzied pantomime to secrecy and silence.



"Tell me one thing," said Miggs. "Is it thieves?"

"No—no—no!" cried Mr. Tappertit.

"Then," said Miggs more faintly than before, "it's fire. Where is it, sir? It's near this room, I know. I've a good conscience, sir, and would much rather die than go down a ladder. All I wish is, respecting my love to my married sister, Golden Lion Court, number twenty-sivin, second bell-handle on the right-hand door-post."

"Miggs!" cried Mr. Tappertit, "don't you know me? Sim, you know—Sim——"

"Oh! what about him?" cried Miggs, clasping her hands. "Is he in any danger? Is he in the midst of flames and blazes? Oh gracious, gracious!"

"Why, I'm here, ain't I?" rejoined Mr. Tappertit, knocking himself on the breast. "Don't you see me? What a fool you are, Miggs!"

"There!" cried Miggs, unmindful of this compliment. "Why—so it—— Goodness, what is the meaning of—— If you please, mim, here's——"

"No, no!" cried Mr. Tappertit, standing on tiptoe, as if by that means he, in the street, were any nearer being able to stop the mouth of Miggs in the garret. "Don't! I've been out without leave, and something or another's the matter with the lock. Come down, and undo the shop-window, that I may get in that way."

"I dursn't do it, Simmun," cried Miggs—for that was her pronunciation of his Christian name. "I dursn't do it, indeed. You know as well as anybody how particular I am. And to come down in the dead of night, when the house is wrapped in slumbers and veiled in obscurity!" And there she stopped and shivered, for her modesty caught cold at the very thought.

"But, Miggs," cried Mr. Tappertit, getting under the lamp, that she might see his eyes. "My darling Miggs——"

Miggs screamed slightly.

"—That I love so much, and never can help thinking of,"—and it is impossible to describe the use he made of his eyes when he said this,— "do—for my sake, do."

"Oh, Simmun," cried Miggs, "this is worse than all. I know, if I come down, you'll go and——"

"And what, my precious?" said Mr. Tappertit.

"And try," said Miggs hysterically, "to kiss me, or some such dreadfulness; I know you will!"

"I swear I won't," said Mr. Tappertit with remarkable earnestness. "Upon my soul I won't. It's getting broad day, and the watch-

man's waking up. Angelic Miggs! If you'll only come and let me in, I promise you faithfully and truly I won't."

Miss Miggs, whose gentle heart was touched, did not wait for the oath (knowing how strong the temptation was, and fearing he might forswear himself), but tripped lightly down the stairs, and with her own fair hands drew back the rough fastenings of the workshop window. Having helped the wayward 'prentice in, she faintly articulated the words "Simmun is safe!" and yielding to her woman's nature, immediately became insensible.

"I knew I should quench her," said Sim, rather embarrassed by this circumstance. "Of course I was certain it would come to this, but there was nothing else to be done. If I hadn't eyed her over, she wouldn't have come down. Here. Keep up a minute, Miggs. What a slippery figure she is! There's no holding her comfortably. Do keep up a minute, Miggs, will you?"

As Miggs, however, was deaf to all entreaties, Mr. Tappertit leant her against the wall as one might dispose of a walking-stick or umbrella, until he had secured the window, when he took her in his arms again, and in short stages and with great difficulty—arising mainly from her being tall and his being short, and perhaps in some degree from that peculiar physical conformation on which he had already remarked—carried her up-stairs, and planting her in the same umbrella or walking-stick fashion just inside her own door, left her to her repose.

"He may be as cool as he likes," said Miss Miggs, recovering as soon as she was left alone: "but I'm in his confidence, and he can't help himself, nor couldn't if he was twenty Simmunes!"

## CHAPTER X.

**I**T was on one of those mornings, common in early spring, when the year, fickle and changeable in its youth like all other created things, is undecided whether to step backward into winter or forward into summer, and in its uncertainty inclines now to the one and now to the other, and now to both at once—wooing summer in the sunshine, and lingering still with winter in the shade—it was, in short, on one of those mornings when it is hot and cold, wet and dry, bright and lowering, sad and cheerful, withering and genial, in the compass of one short hour, that



old John Willet, who was dropping asleep over the copper boiler, was roused by the sound of a horse's feet, and glancing out at window, beheld a traveller of goodly promise checking his bridle at the Maypole door.

He was none of your flippant young fellows, who would call for a tankard of mulled ale, and make themselves as much at home as if they had ordered a hogshead of wine; none of your audacious young swaggerers, who would even penetrate into the bar—that solemn sanctuary—and, smiting old John upon the back, inquire if there was never a pretty girl in the house, and where he hid his little chambermaids, with a hundred other impertinences of that nature; none of your free-and-easy companions, who would scrape their boots upon the fire-dogs in the common room, and be not at all particular on the subject of spittoons; none of your unconscionable blades, requiring impossible chops, and taking unheard-of pickles for granted. He was a staid, grave, placid gentleman, something past the prime of life, yet upright in his carriage for all that, and slim as a greyhound. He was well mounted upon a sturdy chestnut cob, and had the graceful seat of an experienced horseman; while his riding gear, though free from such fopperies as were then in vogue, was handsome and well chosen. He wore a riding coat of a somewhat brighter green than might have been expected to suit the taste of a gentleman of his years, with a short, black velvet cape, and laced pocket-holes and cuffs, all of a jaunty fashion; his linen, too, was of the finest kind, worked in a rich pattern at the wrists and throat, and scrupulously white. Although he seemed, judging from the mud he had picked up on the way, to have come from London, his horse was as smooth and cool as his own iron-grey periwig and pigtail. Neither man nor beast had turned a single hair; and, saving for his soiled skirts and spatterdashes, this gentleman with his blooming face, white teeth, exactly-ordered dress, and perfect calmness, might have come from making an elaborate and leisurely toilet, to sit for an equestrian portrait at old John Willet's gate.

It must not be supposed that John observed these several characteristics by other than very slow degrees, or that he took in more than half a one at a time, or that he even made up his mind upon that without a great deal of very serious consideration. Indeed, if he had been distracted in the first instance by questionings and orders, it would have taken him at the least a fortnight to have noted what is here set down; but it happened that the gentleman, being struck with the old house, or with the plump pigeons which

were skimming and curtsying about it, or with the tall maypole, on the top of which a weathercock, which had been out of order for fifteen years, performed a perpetual walk to the music of its own creaking, sat for some little time looking round in silence. Hence John, standing with his hand upon the horse's bridle, and his great eyes on the rider, and with nothing passing to divert his thoughts, had really got some of these little circumstances into his brain by the time he was called upon to speak.

"A quaint place this," said the gentleman—and his voice was as rich as his dress. "Are you the landlord?"

"At your service, sir," replied John Willet.

"You can give my horse good stabling, can you, and me an early dinner (I am not particular what, so that it be cleanly served), and a decent room—of which there seems to be no lack in this great mansion?" said the stranger, again running his eyes over the exterior.

"You can have, sir," returned John, with a readiness quite surprising, "anything you please."

"It's well I am easily satisfied," returned the other with a smile, "or that might prove a hardy pledge, my friend." And saying so, he dismounted, with the aid of the block before the door, in a twinkling.

"Halloa there! Hugh!" roared John. "I ask your pardon, sir, for keeping you standing in the porch; but my son has gone to town on business, and the boy being, as I may say, of a kind of use to me, I'm rather put out when he's away. Hugh!—a dreadful idle vagrant fellow, sir—half a gipsy, as I think—always sleeping in the sun in summer, and in the straw in winter-time, sir—Hugh! Dear Lord, to keep a gentleman a waiting here, through him!—Hugh! I wish that chap was dead, I do indeed."

"Possibly he is," returned the other. "I should think, if he were living, he would have heard you by this time."

"In his fits of laziness, he sleeps so desperate hard," said the distracted host, "that if you were to fire off cannon-balls into his ears, it wouldn't wake him, sir."

The guest made no remark upon this novel cure for drowsiness, and recipe for making people lively, but, with his hands clasped behind him, stood in the porch, apparently very much amused to see old John, with the bridle in his hand, wavering between a strong impulse to abandon the animal to his fate, and a half-disposition to lead him into the house, and shut him up in the parlour, while he waited on his master.

"Pillory the fellow, here he is at last!" cried

John in the very height and zenith of his distress. "Did you hear me a calling, villain?"

The figure he addressed made no answer, but, putting his hand upon the saddle, sprang into it at a bound, turned the horse's head towards the stable, and was gone in an instant.

"Brisk enough when he is awake," said the guest.

"Brisk enough, sir!" replied John, looking at the place where the horse had been, as if not yet understanding quite what had become of him. "He melts, I think. He goes like a



"HE MELTS, I THINK. HE GOES LIKE A DROP OF FROTH. YOU LOOK AT HIM, AND THERE HE IS. YOU LOOK AT HIM AGAIN, AND—THERE HE ISN'T."

drop of froth. You look at him, and there he is. You look at him again, and—there he isn't."

Having, in the absence of any more words, put this sudden climax to what he had faintly intended should be a long explanation of the

whole life and character of his man, the oracular John Willet led the gentleman up his wide dismantled staircase into the Maypole's best apartment.

It was spacious enough in all conscience, occupying the whole depth of the house, and



having at either end a great bay-window, as large as many modern rooms; in which some few panes of stained glass, emblazoned with fragments of armorial bearings, though cracked, and patched, and shattered, yet remained; at-testing, by their presence, that the former owner had made the very light subservient to his state, and pressed the sun itself into his list of flatterers; bidding it, when it shone into his chamber, reflect the badges of his ancient family, and take new hues and colours from their pride.

But those were old days, and now every little ray came and went as it would; telling the plain, bare, searching truth. Although the best room of the inn, it had the melancholy aspect of grandeur in decay, and was much too vast for comfort. Rich rustling hangings, waving on the walls; and, better far, the rustling of youth and beauty's dress; the light of women's eyes, outshining the tapers and their own rich jewels; the sound of gentle tongues and music, and the tread of maiden feet, had once been there, and filled it with delight. But they were gone, and with them all its gladness. It was no longer a home; children were never born and bred there; the fireside had become mercenary—a something to be bought and sold—a very courtesan: let who would die, or sit beside, or leave it, it was still the same—it missed nobody, cared for nobody, had equal warmth and smiles for all. God help the man whose heart ever changes with the world as an old mansion when it becomes an inn!

No effort had been made to furnish this chilly waste, but before the broad chimney a colony of chairs and tables had been planted on a square of carpet, flanked by a ghostly screen, enriched with figures, grinning and grotesque. After lighting with his own hands the faggots which were heaped upon the hearth, old John withdrew to hold grave counsel with his cook touching the stranger's entertainment; while the guest himself, seeing small comfort in the yet unkindled wood, opened a lattice in the distant window, and basked in a sickly gleam of cold March sun.

Leaving the window now and then to rake the crackling logs together, or pace the echoing room from end to end, he closed it when the fire was quite burnt up, and having wheeled the easiest chair into the warmest corner, summoned John Willet.

"Sir," said John.

He wanted pen, ink, and paper. There was an old standish on the high mantel-shelf, containing a dusty apology for all three. Having set this before him, the landlord was retiring, when he motioned him to stay.

"There's a house not far from here," said the

guest when he had written a few lines, "which you call the Warren, I believe?"

As this was said in the tone of one who knew the fact, and asked the question as a thing of course, John contented himself with nodding his head in the affirmative; at the same time taking one hand out of his pockets to cough behind, and then putting it in again.

"I want this note," said the guest, glancing on what he had written, and folding it, "conveyed there without loss of time, and an answer brought back here. Have you a messenger at hand?"

John was thoughtful for a minute or thereabouts, and then said Yes.

"Let me see him," said the guest.

This was disconcerting; for Joe being out, and Hugh engaged in rubbing down the chestnut cob, he designed sending on the errand Barnaby, who had just then arrived in one of his rambles, and who, so that he thought himself employed on grave and serious business, would go anywhere.

"Why, the truth is," said John after a long pause, "that the person who'd go quickest is a sort of natural, as one may say, sir; and though quick of foot, and as much to be trusted as the post itself, he's not good at talking, being touched and flighty, sir."

"You don't," said the guest, raising his eyes to John's fat face, "you don't mean—what's the fellow's name?—you don't mean Barnaby?"

"Yes, I do," returned the landlord, his features turning quite expressive with surprise.

"How comes he to be here?" inquired the guest, leaning back in his chair; speaking in the bland, even tone from which he never varied; and with the same soft, courteous, never-changing smile upon his face. "I saw him in London last night."

"He's for ever here one hour, and there the next," returned old John, after the usual pause to get the question in his mind. "Sometimes he walks, and sometimes runs. He's known along the road by everybody, and sometimes comes here in a cart or chaise, and sometimes riding double. He comes and goes, through wind, rain, snow, and hail, and on the darkest nights. Nothing hurts *him*."

"He goes often to this Warren, does he not?" said the guest carelessly. "I seem to remember his mother telling me something to that effect yesterday. But I was not attending to the good woman much."

"You're right, sir," John made answer, "he does. His father, sir, was murdered in that house."

"So I have heard," returned the guest, taking a gold toothpick from his pocket, with the same sweet smile. "A very disagreeable circumstance for the family."

"Very," said John with a puzzled look, as if it occurred to him, dimly and afar off, that this might by possibility be a cool way of treating the subject.

"All the circumstances after a murder," said the guest, soliloquising, "must be dreadfully unpleasant—so much bustle and disturbance—no repose—a constant dwelling upon one subject—and the running in and out, and up and down stairs, intolerable. I wouldn't have such a thing happen to anybody I was nearly interested in on any account. 'Twould be enough to wear one's life out.—You were going to say, friend——" he added, turning to John again.

"Only that Mrs. Rudge lives on a little pension from the family, and that Barnaby's as free of the house as any cat or dog about it," answered John. "Shall he do your errand, sir?"

"Oh yes," replied the guest. "Oh, certainly. Let him do it by all means. Please to bring him here, that I may charge him to be quick. If he objects to come, you may tell him it's Mr. Chester. He will remember my name I dare say."

John was so very much astonished to find who his visitor was, that he could express no astonishment at all, by looks or otherwise, but left the room as if he were in the most placid and imperturbable of all possible conditions. It has been reported that when he got down-stairs, he looked steadily at the boiler for ten minutes by the clock, and all that time never once left off shaking his head; for which statement there would seem to be some ground of truth and feasibility, inasmuch as that interval of time did certainly elapse before he returned with Barnaby to the guest's apartment.

"Come hither, lad," said Mr. Chester. "You know Mr. Geoffrey Haredale?"

Barnaby laughed, and looked at the landlord as though he would say, "You hear him?" John, who was greatly shocked at this breach of decorum, clapped his finger to his nose, and shook his head in mute remonstrance.

"He knows him, sir," said John, frowning aside at Barnaby, "as well as you or I do."

"I haven't the pleasure of much acquaintance with the gentleman," returned his guest. "You may have. Limit the comparison to yourself, my friend."

Although this was said with the same easy affability, and the same smile, John felt himself put down, and laying the indignity at Barnaby's

door, determined to kick his raven on the very first opportunity.

"Give that," said the guest, who had by this time sealed the note, and who beckoned his messenger towards him as he spoke, "into Mr. Haredale's own hands. Wait for an answer, and bring it back to me—here. If you should find that Mr. Haredale is engaged just now, tell him—— Can he remember a message, landlord?"

"When he chooses, sir," replied John. "He won't forget this one."

"How are you sure of that?"

John merely pointed to him as he stood with his head bent forward, and his earnest gaze fixed closely on his questioner's face; and nodded sagely.

"Tell him then, Barnaby, should he be engaged," said Mr. Chester, "that I shall be glad to wait his convenience here, and to see him (if he will call) at any time this evening.—At the worst I can have a bed here, Willet, I suppose?"

Old John, immensely flattered by the personal notoriety implied in this familiar form of address, answered, with something like a knowing look, "I should believe you could, sir," and was turning over in his mind various forms of eulogium, with the view of selecting one appropriate to the qualities of his best bed, when his ideas were put to flight by Mr. Chester giving Barnaby the letter, and bidding him make all speed away.

"Speed!" said Barnaby, folding the little packet in his breast. "Speed! If you want to see hurry and mystery, come here. Here!"

With that, he put his hand, very much to John Willet's horror, on the guest's fine broad-cloth sleeve, and led him stealthily to the back-window.

"Look down there," he said softly. "Do you mark how they whisper in each other's ears; then dance and leap, to make believe they are in sport? Do you see how they stop for a moment, when they think there is no one looking, and mutter among themselves again; and then how they roil and gambol, delighted with the mischief they've been plotting? Look at 'em now. See how they whirl and plunge. And now they stop again, and whisper cautiously together—little thinking, mind, how often I have lain upon the grass and watched them. I say—what is it that they plot and hatch? Do you know?"

"They are only clothes," returned the guest, "such as we wear; hanging on those lines to dry, and fluttering in the wind."



"Clothes!" echoed Barnaby, looking close into his face, and falling quickly back. "Ha! ha! Why, how much better to be silly than as wise as you! You don't see shadowy people there, like those that live in sleep—not you. Nor eyes in the knotted panes of glass, nor swift ghosts when it blows hard, nor do you hear voices in the air, nor see men stalking in the sky—not you! I lead a merrier life than you, with all your cleverness. You're the dull men. We're the bright ones. Ha! ha! I'll not change with you, clever as you are,—not I!"

With that, he waved his hat above his head, and darted off.

"A strange creature, upon my word!" said the guest, pulling out a handsome box, and taking a pinch of snuff.

"He wants imagination," said Mr. Willet, very slowly and after a long silence; "that's what he wants. I've tried to instil it into him, many and many's the time; but"—John added this in confidence—"he an't made for it; that's the fact."

To record that Mr. Chester smiled at John's remark would be little to the purpose, for he preserved the same conciliatory and pleasant look at all times. He drew his chair nearer to the fire, though, as a kind of hint that he would prefer to be alone, and John, having no reasonable excuse for remaining, left him to himself.

Very thoughtful old John Willet was while the dinner was preparing; and if his brain were ever less clear at one time than another, it is but reasonable to suppose that he addled it in no slight degree by shaking his head so much that day. That Mr. Chester, between whom and Mr. Haredale, it was notorious to all the neighbourhood, a deep and bitter animosity existed, should come down there for the sole purpose, as it seemed, of seeing him, and should choose the Maypole for their place of meeting, and should send to him express, were stumbling-blocks John could not overcome. The only resource he had was to consult the boiler, and wait impatiently for Barnaby's return.

But Barnaby delayed beyond all precedent. The visitor's dinner was served, removed, his wine was set, the fire replenished, the hearth clean swept; the light waned without, it grew dusk, became quite dark, and still no Barnaby appeared. Yet, though John Willet was full of wonder and misgiving, his guest sat cross-legged in the easy-chair, to all appearance as little ruffled in his thoughts as in his dress—the same calm, easy, cool gentleman, without a care or thought beyond his golden toothpick.

"Barnaby's late," John ventured to observe,

as he placed a pair of tarnished candlesticks, some three feet high, upon the table, and snuffed the lights they held.

"He is rather so," replied the guest, sipping his wine. "He will not be much longer I dare say."

John coughed, and raked the fire together.

"As your roads bear no very good character, if I may judge from my son's mishap, though," said Mr. Chester, "and as I have no fancy to be knocked on the head—which is not only disconcerting at the moment, but places one, besides, in a ridiculous position with respect to the people who chance to pick one up—I shall stop here to-night. I think you said you had a bed to spare."

"Such a bed, sir," returned John Willet; "ay, such a bed as few, even of the gentry's houses, own. A fixter here, sir. I've heard say that bedstead is nigh two hundred years of age. Your noble son—a fine young gentleman—slept in it last, sir, half a year ago."

"Upon my life, a recommendation!" said the guest, shrugging his shoulders and wheeling his chair nearer to the fire. "See that it be well aired, Mr. Willet, and let a blazing fire be lighted there at once. This house is something damp and chilly."

John raked the faggots up again, more from habit than presence of mind, or any reference to this remark, and was about to withdraw, when a bounding step was heard upon the stair, and Barnaby came panting in.

"He'll have his foot in the stirrup in an hour's time," he cried, advancing. "He has been riding hard all day—has just come home—but will be in the saddle again as soon as he has ate and drank, to meet his loving friend."

"Was that his message?" asked the visitor, looking up, but without the smallest discomposure—or at least without the smallest show of any.

"All but the last words," Barnaby rejoined. "He meant those. I saw that in his face."

"This for your pains," said the other, putting money in his hand, and glancing at him steadfastly. "This for your pains, sharp Barnaby."

"For Grip, and me, and Hugh, to share among us," he rejoined, putting it up, and nodding, as he counted it on his fingers. "Grip one, me two, Hugh three; the dog, the goat, the cats—well, we shall spend it pretty soon, I warn you. Stay. Look. Do you wise men see nothing there now?"

He bent eagerly down on one knee, and gazed intently at the smoke, which was rolling up the chimney in a thick black cloud. John

Willet, who appeared to consider himself particularly and chiefly referred to under the term wise men, looked that way likewise, and with great solidity of feature.

"Now, where do they go to when they spring so fast up there," asked Barnaby; "eh? Why do they tread so closely on each other's heels, and why are they always in a hurry?—which is what you blame me for, when I only take pattern by these busy folk about me. More of 'em! catching to each other's skirts; and as fast as they go, others come! What a merry dance it is! I would that Grip and I could frisk like that!"

"What has he in that basket at his back?" asked the guest after a few moments, during which Barnaby was still bending down to look higher up the chimney, and earnestly watching the smoke.

"In this?" he answered, jumping up before John Willet could reply—shaking it as he spoke, and stooping his head to listen. "In this? What is there here? Tell him!"

"A devil, a devil, a devil!" cried a hoarse voice.

"Here's money!" said Barnaby, chinking it in his hand, "money for a treat, Grip!"

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" replied the raven; "keep up your spirits. Never say die. Bow, wow, wow!"

Mr. Willet, who appeared to entertain strong doubts whether a customer in a laced coat and fine linen could be supposed to have any acquaintance even with the existence of such unpolite gentry as the bird claimed to belong to, took Barnaby off at this juncture, with the view of preventing any other improper declarations, and quitted the room with his very best bow.

## CHAPTER XI.

**T**HERE was great news that night for the regular Maypole customers, to each of whom, as he straggled in to occupy his allotted seat in the chimney-corner, John, with a most impressive slowness of delivery, and in an apoplectic whisper, communicated the fact that Mr. Chester was alone in the large room up-stairs, and was waiting the arrival of Mr. Geoffrey Haredale, to whom he had sent a letter (doubtless of a threatening nature) by the hands of Barnaby, then and there present.

For a little knot of smokers and solemn gossips, who had seldom any new topics of dis-

cussion, this was a perfect godsend. Here was a good, dark-looking mystery progressing under that very roof—brought home to the fireside as it were, and enjoyable without the smallest pains or trouble. It is extraordinary what a zest and relish it gave to the drink, and how it heightened the flavour of the tobacco. Every man smoked his pipe with a face of grave and serious delight, and looked at his neighbour with a sort of quiet congratulation. Nay, it was felt to be such a holiday and special night, that, on the motion of little Solomon Daisy, every man (including John himself) put down his sixpence for a can of flip, which grateful beverage was brewed with all dispatch, and set down in the midst of them on the brick floor; both that it might simmer and stew before the fire, and that its fragrant steam, rising up among them and mixing with the wreaths of vapour from their pipes, might shroud them in a delicious atmosphere of their own, and shut out all the world. The very furniture of the room seemed to mellow and deepen in its tone; the ceiling and walls looked blacker and more highly polished, the curtains of a ruddier red; the fire burnt clear and high, and the crickets in the hearth-stone chirped with a more than wonted satisfaction.

There were present two, however, who showed but little interest in the general contentment. Of these, one was Barnaby himself, who slept, or, to avoid being beset with questions, feigned to sleep, in the chimney-corner; the other, Hugh, who, sleeping too, lay stretched upon the bench on the opposite side, in the full glare of the blazing fire.

The light that fell upon this slumbering form showed it in all its muscular and handsome proportions. It was that of a young man, of a hale athletic figure and a giant's strength, whose sunburnt face and swarthy throat, overgrown with jet-black hair, might have served a painter for a model. Loosely attired, in the coarsest and roughest garb, with scraps of straw and hay—his usual bed—clinging here and there, and mingling with his uncombed locks, he had fallen asleep in a posture as careless as his dress. The negligence and disorder of the whole man, with something fierce and sullen in his features, gave him a picturesque appearance, that attracted the regards even of the Maypole customers who knew him well, and caused Long Parkes to say that Hugh looked more like a poaching rascal to-night than ever he had seen him yet.

"He's waiting here, I suppose," said Solomon, "to take Mr. Haredale's horse."

"That's it, sir," replied John Willet. "He's not often in the house, you know. He's more



at his ease among horses than men. I look upon him as a animal himself."

Following up this opinion with a shrug that seemed meant to say, "We can't expect everybody to be like us," John put his pipe into his mouth again, and smoked like one who felt his superiority over the general run of mankind.

"That chap, sir," said John, taking it out again after a time, and pointing at him with the stem, "though he's got all his faculties about him—bottled up and corked down, if I may say so, somewheres or another——"

"Very good!" said Parkes, nodding his head. "A very good expression, Johnny. You'll be a tackling somebody presently. You're in twig to-night, I see."

"Take care," said Mr. Willet, not at all grateful for the compliment, "that I don't tackle you, sir, which I shall certainly endeavour to do, if you interrupt me when I'm making observations.—That chap, I was a saying, though he has all his faculties about him, somewheres or another, bottled up and corked down, has no more imagination than Barnaby has. And why hasn't he?"

The three friends shook their heads at each other; saying by that action, without the trouble of opening their lips, "Do you observe what a philosophical mind our friend has?"

"Why hasn't he?" said John, gently striking the table with his open hand. "Because they was never drawn out of him when he was a boy. That's why. What would any of us have been, if our fathers hadn't drawn our faculties out of us? What would my boy Joe have been, if I hadn't drawn his faculties out of him?—Do you mind what I'm a saying of, gentlemen?"

"Ah! we mind you," cried Parkes. "Go on improving of us, Johnny."

"Consequently, then," said Mr. Willet, "that chap, whose mother was hung when he was a little boy, along with six others, for passing bad notes—and it's a blessed thing to think how many people are hung in batches every six weeks for that and such-like offences, as showing how wide awake our government is—that chap was then turned loose, and had to mind cows, and frighten birds away, and what not, for a few pence to live on, and so got on by degrees to mind horses, and to sleep in course of time in lofts and litter, instead of under haystacks and hedges, till at last he come to be hostler at the Maypole for his board and lodging and a annual trifle—that chap that can't read nor write, and has never had much to do with anything but animals, and has never lived in any way but like the animals he has lived among, *is* a animal.

And," said Mr. Willet, arriving at his logical conclusion, "is to be treated accordingly."

"Willet," said Solomon Daisy, who had exhibited some impatience at the intrusion of so unworthy a subject on their more interesting theme, "when Mr. Chester come this morning, did he order the large room?"

"He signified, sir," said John, "that he wanted a large apartment. Yes. Certainly."

"Why, then, I'll tell you what," said Solomon, speaking softly and with an earnest look. "He and Mr. Haredale are going to fight a duel in it."

Everybody looked at Mr. Willet after this alarming suggestion. Mr. Willet looked at the fire, weighing in his own mind the effect which such an occurrence would be likely to have on the establishment.

"Well," said John, "I don't know—I am sure—I remember that when I went up last, he *had* put the lights upon the mantel-shelf."

"It's as plain," returned Solomon, "as the nose on Parkes's face"—Mr. Parkes, who had a large nose, rubbed it, and looked as if he considered this a personal allusion—"they'll fight in that room. You know by the newspapers what a common thing it is for gentlemen to fight in coffee-houses without seconds. One of 'em will be wounded, or perhaps killed, in this house."

"That was a challenge that Barnaby took then, eh?" said John.

"—Enclosing a slip of paper with the measure of his sword upon it, I'll bet a guinea," answered the little man. "We know what sort of gentleman Mr. Haredale is. You have told us what Barnaby said about his looks when he came back. Depend upon it I'm right. Now, mind."

The flip had had no flavour till now. The tobacco had been of mere English growth, compared with its present taste. A duel in that great old rambling room up-stairs, and the best bed ordered already for the wounded man!

"Would it be swords or pistols now?" said John.

"Heaven knows. Perhaps both," returned Solomon. "The gentlemen wear swords, and may easily have pistols in their pockets—most likely have, indeed. If they fire at each other without effect, then they'll draw, and go to work in earnest."

A shade passed over Mr. Willet's face as he thought of broken windows and disabled furniture, but bethinking himself that one of the parties would probably be left alive to pay the damage, he brightened up again.

"And then," said Solomon, looking from face to face, "then we shall have one of those stains upon the floor that never come out. If Mr. Haredale wins, depend upon it, it'll be a deep one; or if he loses, it will perhaps be deeper still, for he'll never give in unless he's beaten down. We know him better, eh?"

"Better indeed!" they whispered all together.

"As to its ever being got out again," said Solomon, "I tell you it never will, or can be. Why, do you know that it has been tried at a certain house we are acquainted with?"

"The Warren!" cried John. "No, sure!"

"Yes, sure—yes. It's only known by very few. It has been whispered about, though, for all that. They planed the board away, but there it was. They went deep, but it went deeper. They put new boards down, but there was one great spot that came through still, and showed itself in the old place. And—harkye—draw nearer—Mr. Geoffrey made that room his study, and sits there always, with his foot (as I have heard) upon it; and he believes, through thinking of it long and very much, that it will never fade until he finds the man who did the deed."

As this recital ended, and they all drew closer round the fire, the tramp of a horse was heard without.

"The very man!" cried John, starting up. "Hugh! Hugh!"

The sleeper staggered to his feet, and hurried after him. John quickly returned, ushering in with great attention and deference (for Mr. Haredale was his landlord) the long-expected visitor, who strode into the room clanking his heavy boots upon the floor; and looking keenly round upon the bowing group, raised his hat in acknowledgment of their profound respect.

"You have a stranger here, Willet, who sent to me," he said in a voice which sounded naturally stern and deep. "Where is he?"

"In the great room up-stairs, sir," answered John.

"Show the way. Your staircase is dark, I know. Gentlemen, good night."

With that, he signed to the landlord to go on before; and went clanking out, and up the stairs; old John, in his agitation, ingeniously lighting everything but the way, and making a stumble at every second step.

"Stop!" he said, when they reached the landing. "I can announce myself. Don't wait."

He laid his hand upon the door, entered, and shut it heavily. Mr. Willet was by no means disposed to stand there listening by himself,

especially as the walls were very thick; so descended with much greater alacrity than he had come up, and joined his friends below.

## CHAPTER XII.

**T**HERE was a brief pause in the stateroom of the Maypole, as Mr. Haredale tried the lock to satisfy himself that he had shut the door securely, and, striding up the dark chamber to where the screen enclosed a little patch of light and warmth, presented himself, abruptly and in silence, before the smiling guest.

If the two had no greater sympathy in their inward thoughts than in their outward bearing and appearance, the meeting did not seem likely to prove a very calm or pleasant one. With no great disparity between them in point of years, they were, in every other respect, as unlike and far removed from each other as two men could well be. The one was soft-spoken, delicately made, precise, and elegant; the other, a burly square-built man, negligently dressed, rough and abrupt in manner, stern, and, in his present mood, forbidding both in look and speech. The one preserved a calm and placid smile; the other, a distrustful frown. The newcomer, indeed, appeared bent on showing, by his every tone and gesture, his determined opposition and hostility to the man he had come to meet. The guest who received him, on the other hand, seemed to feel that the contrast between them was all in his favour, and to derive a quiet exultation from it which put him more at his ease than ever.

"Haredale," said this gentleman, without the least appearance of embarrassment or reserve, "I am very glad to see you."

"Let us dispense with compliments. They are misplaced between us," returned the other, waving his hand, "and say plainly what we have to say. You have asked me to meet you. I am here. Why do we stand face to face again?"

"Still the same frank and sturdy character, I see!"

"Good or bad, sir, I am," returned the other, leaning his arm upon the chimney-piece, and turning a haughty look upon the occupant of the easy-chair, "the man I used to be. I have lost no old likings or dislikings; my memory has not failed me by a hair's breadth. You ask me to give you a meeting. I say, I am here."



"Our meeting, Haredale," said Mr. Chester, tapping his snuff-box, and following with a smile the impatient gesture he had made—perhaps unconsciously—towards his word, "is one of conference and peace, I hope?"

"I have come here," returned the other, "at your desire, holding myself bound to meet you when and where you would. I have not come to bandy pleasant speeches, or hollow professions. You are a smooth man of the world, sir, and at such play have me at a disadvantage. The very last man on this earth with whom I would enter the lists to combat with gentle compliments and masked faces is Mr. Chester, I do assure you. I am not his match at such weapons, and have reason to believe that few men are."

"You do me a great deal of honour, Haredale," returned the other most composedly, "and I thank you. I will be frank with you—"

"I beg your pardon—will be what?"

"Frank—open—perfectly candid."

"Hah!" cried Mr. Haredale, drawing in his breath. "But don't let me interrupt you."

"So resolved am I to hold this course," returned the other, tasting his wine with great deliberation, "that I have determined not to quarrel with you, and not to be betrayed into a warm expression or a hasty word."

"There again," said Mr. Haredale, "you will have me at a great advantage. Your self-command—"

"Is not to be disturbed, when it will serve my purpose, you would say," rejoined the other, interrupting him with the same complacency. "Granted. I allow it. And I have a purpose to serve now. So have you. I am sure our object is the same. Let us attain it like sensible men, who have ceased to be boys some time.—Do you drink?"

"With my friends," returned the other.

"At least," said Mr. Chester, "you will be seated?"

"I will stand," returned Mr. Haredale impatiently, "on this dismantled beggared hearth, and not pollute it, fallen as it is, with mockeries. Go on!"

"You are wrong, Haredale," said the other, crossing his legs, and smiling as he held his glass up in the bright glow of the fire. "You are really very wrong. The world is a lively place enough, in which we must accommodate ourselves to circumstances, sail with the stream as glibly as we can, be content to take froth for substance, the surface for the depth, the counterfeit for the real coin. I wonder no philo-

sopher has ever established that our globe itself is hollow. It should be, if Nature is consistent in her works."

"You think it is, perhaps?"

"I should say," he returned, sipping his wine, "there could be no doubt about it. Well; we, in our trifling with this jingling toy, have had the ill-luck to jostle and fall out. We are not what the world calls friends; but we are as good and true and loving friends, for all that, as nine out of every ten of those on whom it bestows the title. You have a niece, and I a son—a fine lad, Haredale, but foolish. They fall in love with each other, and form what this same world calls an attachment; meaning a something fanciful and false like all the rest, which, if it took its own free time, would break like any other bubble. But it may not have its own free time—will not, if they are left alone—and the question is, shall we two, because society calls us enemies, stand aloof, and let them rush into each other's arms, when, by approaching each other sensibly, as we do now, we can prevent it, and part them?"

"I love my niece," said Mr. Haredale after a short silence. "It may sound strangely in your ears; but I love her."

"Strangely, my good fellow!" cried Mr. Chester, lazily filling his glass again, and pulling out his toothpick. "Not at all. I like Ned too—or, as you say, love him—that's the word among such near relations. I'm very fond of Ned. He's an amazingly good fellow, and a handsome fellow—foolish and weak as yet; that's all. But the thing is, Haredale—for I'll be very frank, as I told you I would at first—independently of any dislike that you and I might have to being related to each other, and independently of the religious differences between us—and damn it, that's important—I couldn't afford a match of this description. Ned and I couldn't do it. It's impossible."

"Curb your tongue, in God's name, if this conversation is to last," retorted Mr. Haredale fiercely. "I have said I love my niece. Do you think that, loving her, I would have her fling her heart away on any man who had your blood in his veins?"

"You see," said the other, not at all disturbed, "the advantage of being so frank and open. Just what I was about to add, upon my honour! I am amazingly attached to Ned—quite dote upon him, indeed—and even if we could afford to throw ourselves away, that very objection would be quite insuperable.—I wish you'd take some wine."

"Mark me," said Mr. Haredale, striding to

the table, and laying his hand upon it heavily. "If any man believes—presumes to think—that I, in word or deed, or in the wildest dream, ever entertained remotely the idea of Emma Haredale's favouring the suit of one who was akin to you—in any way—I care not what—he lies. He lies, and does me grievous wrong, in the mere thought."

"Haredale," returned the other, rocking himself to and fro as in assent, and nodding at the fire, "it's extremely manly, and really very generous in you, to meet me in this unreserved and handsome way. Upon my word, those are exactly my sentiments, only expressed with much more force and power than I could use—you know my sluggish nature, and will forgive me, I am sure."

"While I would restrain her from all correspondence with your son, and sever their intercourse here, though it should cause her death," said Mr. Haredale, who had been pacing to and fro, "I would do it kindly and tenderly if I can. I have a trust to discharge which my nature is not formed to understand, and, for this reason, the bare fact of there being any love between them comes upon me to-night almost for the first time."

"I am more delighted than I can possibly tell you," rejoined Mr. Chester with the utmost blandness, "to find my own impression so confirmed. You see the advantage of our having met. We understand each other. We quite agree. We have a most complete and thorough explanation, and we know what course to take.—Why don't you taste your tenant's wine? It's really very good."

"Pray who," said Mr. Haredale, "have aided Emma, or your son? Who are their go-betweens and agents—do you know?"

"All the good people hereabouts—the neighbourhood in general, I think," returned the other with his most affable smile. "The messenger I sent you to-day, foremost among them all."

"The idiot? Barnaby?"

"You are surprised? I am, glad of that, for I was rather so myself. Yes. I wring that from his mother—a very decent sort of woman—from whom, indeed, I chiefly learnt how serious the matter had become, and so determined to ride out here to-day, and hold a parley with you on this neutral ground.—You're stouter than you used to be, Haredale, but you look extremely well."

"Our business, I presume, is nearly at an end," said Mr. Haredale with an expression of impatience he was at no pains to conceal.

"Trust me, Mr. Chester, my niece shall change from this time. I will appeal," he added in a lower tone, "to her woman's heart, her dignity, her pride, her duty——"

"I shall do the same by Ned," said Mr. Chester, restoring some errant faggots to their places in the grate with the toe of his boot. "If there is anything real in the world, it is those amazingly fine feelings and those natural obligations which must subsist between father and son. I shall put it to him on every ground of moral and religious feeling. I shall represent to him that we cannot possibly afford it—that I have always looked forward to his marrying well, for a genteel provision for myself in the autumn of life—that there are a great many clamorous dogs to pay, whose claims are perfectly just and right, and who must be paid out of his wife's fortune. In short, that the very highest and most honourable feelings of our nature, with every consideration of filial duty and affection, and all that sort of thing, imperatively demand that he should run away with an heiress."

"And break her heart as speedily as possible?" said Mr. Haredale, drawing on his gloves.

"There Ned will act exactly as he pleases," returned the other, sipping his wine; "that's entirely his affair. I wouldn't for the world interfere with my son, Haredale, beyond a certain point. The relationship between father and son, you know, is positively quite a holy kind of bond.—*Won't* you let me persuade you to take one glass of wine? Well! as you please, as you please," he added, helping himself again.

"Chester," said Mr. Haredale after a short silence, during which he had eyed his smiling face from time to time intently, "you have the head and heart of an evil spirit in all matters of deception."

"Your health!" said the other with a nod. "But I have interrupted you——"

"If now," pursued Mr. Haredale, "we should find it difficult to separate these young people, and break off their intercourse—if, for instance, you find it difficult on your side, what course do you intend to take?"

"Nothing plainer, my good fellow, nothing easier," returned the other, shrugging his shoulders and stretching himself more comfortably before the fire. "I shall then exert those powers on which you flatter me so highly—though, upon my word, I don't deserve your compliments to their full extent—and resort to a few little trivial subterfuges for rousing jealousy and resentment. You see?"



"In short, justifying the means by the end, we are, as a last resource for tearing them asunder, to resort to treachery and—and lying," said Mr. Haredale.

"Oh dear no! Fie, fie!" returned the other, relishing a pinch of snuff extremely. "Not lying. Only a little management, a little diplomacy, a little—intriguing, that's the word."

"I wish," said Mr. Haredale, moving to and fro, and stopping and moving on again, like one who was ill at ease, "that this could have been foreseen or prevented. But as it has gone

so far, and it is necessary for us to act, it is of no use shrinking or regretting. Well! I shall second your endeavours to the utmost of my power. There is one topic in the whole wide range of human thoughts on which we both agree. We shall act in concert, but apart. There will be no need, I hope, for us to meet again."

"Are you going?" said Mr. Chester, rising with a graceful indolence. "Let me light you down the stairs."

"Pray keep your seat," returned the other drily; "I know the way." So, waving his hand



"CHESTER," SAID MR. HAREDALE AFTER A SHORT SILENCE, DURING WHICH HE HAD EYED HIS SMILING FACE FROM TIME TO TIME INTENTLY, "YOU HAVE THE HEAD AND HEART OF AN EVIL SPIRIT IN ALL MATTERS OF DECEPTION."

slightly, and putting on his hat as he turned upon his heel, he went clanking out as he had come, shut the door behind him, and tramped down the echoing stairs.

"Pah! A very coarse animal indeed!" said Mr. Chester, composing himself in the easy-chair again. "A rough brute. Quite a human badger!"

John Willet and his friends, who had been listening intently for the clash of swords, or firing of pistols in the great room, and had, indeed, settled the order in which they should

rush in when summoned—in which procession old John had carefully arranged that he should bring up the rear—were very much astonished to see Mr. Haredale come down without a scratch, call for his horse, and ride away thoughtfully at a foot-pace. After some consideration, it was decided that he had left the gentleman above for dead, and had adopted this stratagem to divert suspicion or pursuit.

As this conclusion involved the necessity of their going up-stairs forthwith, they were about to ascend in the order they had agreed upon,

when a smart ringing at the guest's bell, as if he had pulled it vigorously, overthrew all their speculations, and involved them in great uncertainty and doubt. At length Mr. Willet agreed to go up-stairs himself, escorted by Hugh and Barnaby, as the strongest and stoutest fellows on the premises, who were to make their appearance under pretence of clearing away the glasses.

Under this protection, the brave and broad-faced John boldly entered the room, half a foot in advance, and received an order for a bootjack without trembling. But when it was brought, and he leant his sturdy shoulder to the guest, Mr. Willet was observed to look very hard into his boots as he pulled them off, and, by opening his eyes much wider than usual, to appear to express some surprise and disappointment at not finding them full of blood. He took occasion, too, to examine the gentleman as closely as he could, expecting to discover sundry loopholes in his person, pierced by his adversary's sword. Finding none, however, and observing in course of time that his guest was as cool and unruffled, both in his dress and temper, as he had been all day, old John at last heaved a deep sigh, and began to think no duel had been fought that night.

"And now, Willet," said Mr. Chester, "if the room's well aired, I'll try the merits of that famous bed."

"The room, sir," returned John, taking up a candle, and nudging Barnaby and Hugh to accompany them, in case the gentleman should unexpectedly drop down faint or dead from some internal wound, "the room's as warm as any toast in a tankard. Barnaby, take you that other candle, and go on before. Hugh! Follow up, sir, with the easy-chair."

In this order—and still, in his earnest inspection, holding his candle very close to the guest; now making him feel extremely warm about the legs, now threatening to set his wig on fire, and constantly begging his pardon with great awkwardness and embarrassment—John led the party to the best bedroom, which was nearly as large as the chamber from which they had come, and held, drawn out near the fire for warmth, a great old spectral bedstead, hung with faded brocade, and ornamented, at the top of each carved post, with a plume of feathers that had once been white, but with dust and age had now grown hearse-like and funereal.

"Good night, my friends," said Mr. Chester with a sweet smile, seating himself, when he had surveyed the room from end to end, in the easy-chair, which his attendants wheeled before

the fire. "Good night! Barnaby, my good fellow, you say some prayers before you go to bed, I hope?"

Barnaby nodded. "He has some nonsense that he calls his prayers, sir," returned old John officiously. "I'm afraid there an't much good in 'em."

"And Hugh?" said Mr. Chester, turning to him.

"Not I," he answered. "I know his"—pointing to Barnaby—"they're well enough. He sings 'em sometimes in the straw. I listen."

"He's quite a animal, sir," John whispered in his ear with dignity. "You'll excuse him, I'm sure. If he has any soul at all, sir, it must be such a very small one, that it don't signify what he does or doesn't in that way. Good night, sir!"

The guest rejoined "God bless you!" with a fervour that was quite affecting; and John, beckoning his guards to go before, bowed himself out of the room, and left him to his rest in the Maypole's ancient bed.

### CHAPTER XIII.

**I**F Joseph Willet, the denounced and proscribed of 'prentices, had happened to be at home when his father's courtly guest presented himself before the Maypole door—that is, if it had not perversely chanced to be one of the half-dozen days in the whole year on which he was at liberty to absent himself for as many hours without question or reproach—he would have contrived, by hook or crook, to dive to the very bottom of Mr. Chester's mystery, and to come at his purpose with as much certainty as though he had been his confidential adviser. In that fortunate case, the lovers would have had quick warning of the ills that threatened them, and the aid of various timely and wise suggestions to boot; for all Joe's readiness of thought and action, and all his sympathies and good wishes, were enlisted in favour of the young people, and were staunch in devotion to their cause. Whether this disposition arose out of his old prepossessions in favour of the young lady, whose history had surrounded her in his mind, almost from his cradle, with circumstances of unusual interest; or from his attachment towards the young gentleman, into whose confidence he had, through his shrewdness and alacrity, and the rendering of sundry important services as a spy and messenger, almost imperceptibly glided;



whether they had their origin in either of these sources, or in the habit natural to youth, or in the constant badgering and worrying of his venerable parent, or in any hidden little love affair of his own which gave him something of a fellow-feeling in the matter, it is needless to inquire—especially as Joe was out of the way, and had no opportunity, on that particular occasion, of testifying to his sentiments either on one side or the other.

It was, in fact, the twenty-fifth of March, which, as most people know to their cost, is, and has been time out of mind, one of those unpleasant epochs termed quarter-days. On this twenty-fifth of March it was John Willet's pride annually to settle, in hard cash, his account with a certain vintner and distiller in the city of London; to give into whose hands a canvas bag containing its exact amount, and not a penny more or less, was the end and object of a journey for Joe, so surely as the year and day came round.

This journey was performed upon an old grey mare, concerning whom John had an indistinct set of ideas hovering about him, to the effect that she could win a plate or cup if she tried. She never had tried, and probably never would now, being some fourteen or fifteen years of age, short in wind, long in body, and rather the worse for wear in respect of her mane and tail. Notwithstanding these slight defects, John perfectly gloried in the animal; and when she was brought round to the door by Hugh, actually retired into the bar, and there, in a secret grove of lemons, laughed with pride.

"There's a bit of horseflesh, Hugh!" said John, when he had recovered enough of self-command to appear at the door again. "There's a comely creatur! There's high mettle! There's bone!"

There was bone enough beyond all doubt; and so Hugh seemed to think, as he sat sideways in the saddle, lazily doubled up with his chin nearly touching his knees; and heedless of the dangling stirrups and loose bridle-rein, sauntered up and down on the little green before the door.

"Mind you take good care of her, sir," said John, appealing from this insensible person to his son and heir, who now appeared, fully equipped and ready. "Don't you ride hard."

"I should be puzzled to do that, I think, father," Joe replied, casting a disconsolate look at the animal.

"None of your impudence, sir, if you please," retorted old John. "What would you ride, sir? A wild ass or zebra would be too tame

for you, wouldn't he, eh, sir? You'd like to ride a roaring lion, wouldn't you, sir, eh, sir? Hold your tongue, sir." When Mr. Willet, in his differences with his son, had exhausted all the questions that occurred to him, and Joe had said nothing at all in answer, he generally wound up by bidding him hold his tongue.

"And what does the boy mean," added Mr. Willet, after he had stared at him for a little time in a species of stupefaction, "by cocking his hat to such an extent? Are you a-going to kill the wintner, sir?"

"No," said Joe tartly; "I'm not. Now your mind's at ease, father."

"With a military air, too!" said Mr. Willet, surveying him from top to toe; "with a swagging, fire-eating, biling-water-drinking sort of way with him! And what do you mean by pulling up the crocuses and snowdrops, eh, sir?"

"It's only a little nosegay," said Joe, red-dening. "There's no harm in that, I hope?"

"You're a boy of business, you are, sir!" said Mr. Willet disdainfully, "to go supposing that wintners care for nosegays."

"I don't suppose anything of the kind," returned Joe. "Let them keep their red noses for bottles and tankards. These are going to Mr. Varden's house."

"And do you suppose *he* minds such things as crocuses?" demanded John.

"I don't know, and, to say the truth, I don't care," said Joe. "Come, father, give me the money, and in the name of patience let me go."

"There it is, sir," replied John; "and take care of it; and mind you don't make too much haste back, but give the mare a long rest. Do you mind?"

"Ay, I mind," returned Joe. "She'll need it, Heaven knows."

"And don't you score up too much at the Black Lion," said John. "Mind that too."

"Then why don't you let me have some money of my own?" retorted Joe sorrowfully; "why don't you, father? What do you send me into London for, giving me only the right to call for my dinner at the Black Lion, which you're to pay for next time you go, as if I was not to be trusted with a few shillings? Why do you use me like this? It's not right of you. You can't expect me to be quiet under it."

"Let him have money!" cried John in a drowsy reverie. "What does he call money—guineas? Hasn't he got money? Over and above the tolls, hasn't he one-and-sixpence?"

"One-and-sixpence!" repeated his son contemptuously.

"Yes, sir," returned John, "one-and-sixpence."

When I was your age, I had never seen so much money in a heap. A shilling of it is in case of accidents—the mare casting a shoe, or the like of that. The other sixpence is to spend in the diversions of London; and the diversion I recommend is going to the top of the Monument, and sitting there. There's no temptation there, sir—no drink—no young women—no bad characters of any sort—nothing but imagination. That's the way I enjoyed myself when I was your age, sir."

To this Joe made no answer, but, beckoning Hugh, leaped into the saddle and rode away; and a very stalwart, manly horseman he looked, deserving a better charger than it was his fortune to bestride. John stood staring after him, or rather after the grey mare (for he had no eyes for her rider), until man and beast had been out of sight some twenty minutes, when he began to think they were gone, and slowly re-entering the house, fell into a gentle doze.

The unfortunate grey mare, who was the agony of Joe's life, floundered along at her own will and pleasure until the Maypole was no longer visible, and then, contracting her legs into what in a puppet would have been looked upon as a clumsy and awkward imitation of a canter, mended her pace all at once, and did it of her own accord. The acquaintance with her rider's usual mode of proceeding, which suggested this improvement in hers, impelled her likewise to turn up a by-way, leading—not to London, but through lanes running parallel with the road they had come, and passing within a few hundred yards of the Maypole, which led finally to an enclosure surrounding a large, old, red-brick mansion—the same of which mention was made as the Warren in the first chapter of this history. Coming to a dead stop in a little copse thereabout, she suffered her rider to dismount with right good-will, and to tie her to the trunk of a tree.

"Stay there, old girl," said Joe, "and let us see whether there's any little commission for me to-day." So saying, he left her to browse upon such stunted grass and weeds as happened to grow within the length of her tether, and passing through a wicket-gate, entered the grounds on foot.

The pathway, after a very few minutes' walking, brought him close to the house, towards which, and especially towards one particular window, he directed many covert glances. It was a dreary, silent building, with echoing courtyards, desolated turret chambers, and whole suites of rooms shut up and mouldering to ruin.

The terrace garden, dark with the shade of overhanging trees, had an air of melancholy that was quite oppressive. Great iron gates, disused for many years, and red with rust, drooping on their hinges and overgrown with long rank grass, seemed as though they tried to sink into the ground, and hide their fallen state among the friendly weeds. The fantastic monsters on the walls, green with age and damp, and covered here and there with moss, looked grim and desolate. There was a sombre aspect even on that part of the mansion which was inhabited and kept in good repair, that struck the beholder with a sense of sadness; of something forlorn and failing, whence cheerfulness was banished. It would have been difficult to imagine a bright fire blazing in the dull and darkened rooms, or to picture any gaiety of heart or revelry that the frowning walls shut in. It seemed a place where such things had been, but could be no more—the very ghost of a house, haunting the old spot in its old outward form, and that was all.

Much of this decayed and sombre look was attributable, no doubt, to the death of its former master, and the temper of its present occupant; but, remembering the tale connected with the mansion, it seemed the very place for such a deed, and one that might have been its predestined theatre years upon years ago. Viewed with reference to this legend, the sheet of water where the steward's body had been found appeared to wear a black and sullen character, such as no other pool might own; the bell upon the roof, that had told the tale of murder to the midnight wind, became a very phantom whose voice would raise the listener's hair on end; and every leafless bough that nodded to another had its stealthy whispering of the crime.

Joe paced up and down the path, sometimes stopping in affected contemplation of the building or the prospect, sometimes leaning against a tree with an assumed air of idleness and indifference, but always keeping an eye upon the window he had singled out at first. After some quarter of an hour's delay, a small white hand was waved to him for an instant from this casement, and the young man, with a respectful bow, departed; saying under his breath, as he crossed his horse again, "No errand for me to-day!"

But the air of smartness, the cock of the hat to which John Willet had objected, and the spring nosegay, all betokened some little errand of his own, having a more interesting object than a vintner or even a locksmith. So, indeed, it turned out; for when he had settled with the



vintner—whose place of business was down in some deep cellars hard by Thames Street, and who was as purple-faced an old gentleman as if he had all his life supported their arched roof on his head—when he had settled the account, and taken the receipt, and declined tasting more than three glasses of old sherry, to the unbounded astonishment of the purple-faced vintner, who, gimlet in hand, had projected an attack upon at least a score of dusty casks, and who stood transfixed, or morally gimleted as it were, to his own wall—when he had done all this, and disposed besides of a frugal dinner at the Black Lion in Whitechapel; spurning the Monument and John's advice, he turned his steps towards the locksmith's house, attracted by the eyes of blooming Dolly Varden.

Joe was by no means a sheepish fellow, but, for all that, when he got to the corner of the street in which the locksmith lived, he could by no means make up his mind to walk straight to the house. First, he resolved to stroll up another street for five minutes, then up another street for five minutes more, and so on until he had lost full half an hour, when he made a bold plunge and found himself with a red face and a beating heart in the smoky workshop.

"Joe Willet, or his ghost?" said Varden, rising from the desk at which he was busy with his books, and looking at him under his spectacles. "Which is it? Joe in the flesh, eh? That's hearty. And how are all the Chigwell company, Joe?"

"Much as usual, sir—they and I agree as well as ever."

"Well, well!" said the locksmith. "We must be patient, Joe, and bear with old folks' foibles. How's the mare, Joe? Does she do the four miles an hour as easily as ever? Ha, ha, ha! Does she, Joe? Eh?—What have we there, Joe—a nosegay?"

"A very poor one, sir. I thought Miss Dolly——"

"No, no," said Gabriel, dropping his voice and shaking his head, "not Dolly. Give 'em to her mother, Joe. A great deal better give 'em to her mother. Would you mind giving 'em to Mrs. Varden, Joe?"

"Oh no, sir," Joe replied, and endeavouring, but not with the greatest possible success, to hide his disappointment. "I shall be very glad, I'm sure."

"That's right," said the locksmith, patting him on the back. "It don't matter who has 'em, Joe?"

"Not a bit, sir."—Dear heart, how the words stuck in his throat!

BARNABY RUDGE, 5.

"Come in," said Gabriel. "I have just been called to tea. She's in the parlour."

"She," thought Joe. "Which of 'em, I wonder—Mrs. or Miss?" The locksmith settled the doubt as neatly as if it had been expressed aloud, by leading him to the door, and saying, "Martha, my dear, here's young Mr. Willet."

Now, Mrs. Varden, regarding the Maypole as a sort of human man-trap, or decoy for husbands; viewing its proprietor, and all who aided and abetted him, in the light of so many poachers among Christian men; and believing, moreover, that the publicans coupled with sinners in Holy Writ were veritable licensed victuallers; was far from being favourably disposed towards her visitor. Wherefore she was taken faint directly; and, being duly presented with the crocuses and snowdrops, divined, on further consideration, that they were the occasion of the languor which had seized upon her spirits. "I'm afraid I couldn't bear the room another minute," said the good lady, "if they remained here. *Would* you excuse my putting them out of window?"

Joe begged she wouldn't mention it on any account, and smiled feebly as he saw them deposited on the sill outside. If anybody could have known the pains he had taken to make up that despised and misused bunch of flowers!

"I feel it quite a relief to get rid of them, I assure you," said Mrs. Varden. "I am better already." And indeed she did appear to have plucked up her spirits.

Joe expressed his gratitude to Providence for this favourable dispensation, and tried to look as if he didn't wonder where Dolly was.

"You're sad people at Chigwell, Mr. Joseph," said Mrs. V.

"I hope not, ma'am," returned Joe.

"You're the cruellest and most inconsiderate people in the world," said Mrs. Varden, bridling. "I wonder old Mr. Willet, having been a married man himself, doesn't know better than to conduct himself as he does. His doing it for profit is no excuse. I would rather pay the money twenty times over, and have Varden come home like a respectable and sober tradesman. If there is one character," said Mrs. Varden with great emphasis, "that offends and disgusts me more than another, it is a sot."

"Come, Martha, my dear," said the locksmith cheerily, "let us have tea, and don't let us talk about sots. There are none here, and Joe don't want to hear about them. I dare say."

At this crisis Miggs appeared with toast.

"I dare say he does not," said Mrs. Varden;

"and I dare say you do not, Varden. It's a very unpleasant subject I have no doubt, though I won't say it's personal"—Miggs coughed—"whatever I may be forced to think," Miggs sneezed expressively. "You never will know, Varden, and nobody at young Mr. Willet's age—you'll excuse me, sir—can be expected to know, what a woman suffers when she is waiting at home under such circumstances. If you don't believe me, as I know you don't, here's Miggs, who is only too often a witness of it—ask her."

"Oh! she were very bad the other night, sir, indeed she were," said Miggs. "If you hadn't the sweetness of an angel in you, mim, I don't think you could abear it, I raly don't."

"Miggs," said Mrs. Varden, "you're profane."

"Beggging your pardon, mim," returned Miggs with shrill rapidity, "such was not my intentions, and such I hope is not my character, though I am but a servant."

"Answering me, Miggs, and providing yourself," retorted her mistress, looking round with dignity, "is one and the same thing. How dare you speak of angels in connection with your sinful fellow-beings—mere"—said Mrs. Varden, glancing at herself in a neighbouring mirror, and arranging the ribbon of her cap in a more becoming fashion—"mere worms and grovellers as we are?"

"I did not intend, mim, if you please, to give offence," said Miggs, confident in the strength of her compliment, and developing strongly in the throat as usual, "and I did not expect it would be took as such. I hope I know my own unworthiness, and that I hate and despise myself and all my fellow-creatures as every practical Christian should."

"You'll have the goodness, if you please," said Mrs. Varden loftily, "to step up-stairs and see if Dolly has finished dressing, and to tell her that the chair that was ordered for her will be here in a minute, and that if she keeps it waiting, I shall send it away that instant.—I'm sorry to see that you don't take your tea, Varden, and that you don't take yours, Mr. Joseph; though of course it would be foolish of me to expect that anything that can be had at home, and in the company of females, would please *you*."

This pronoun was understood in the plural sense, and included both gentlemen, upon both of whom it was rather hard and undeserved, for Gabriel had applied himself to the meal with a very promising appetite, until it was spoilt by Mrs. Varden herself, and Joe had as great a liking for the female society of the locksmith's

house—or for a part of it at all events—as man could well entertain.

But he had no opportunity to say anything in his own defence, for at that moment Dolly herself appeared, and struck him quite dumb with her beauty. Never had Dolly looked so handsome as she did then, in all the glow and grace of youth, with all her charms increased a hundred-fold by a most becoming dress, by a thousand little coquettish ways which nobody could assume with a better grace, and all the sparkling expectation of that accursed party. It is impossible to tell how Joe hated that party, wherever it was, and all the other people who were going to it, whoever they were.

And she hardly looked at him—no, hardly looked at him. And when the chair was seen through the open door coming blundering into the workshop, she actually clapped her hands and seemed glad to go. But Joe gave her his arm—there was some comfort in that—and handed her into it. To see her seat herself inside, with her laughing eyes brighter than diamonds, and her hand—surely she had the prettiest hand in the world—on the ledge of the open window, and her little finger provokingly and pertly tilted up, as if it wondered why Joe didn't squeeze or kiss it! To think how well one or two of the modest snowdrops would have become that delicate bodice, and how they were lying neglected outside the parlour window! To see how Miggs looked on, with a face expressive of knowing how all this loveliness was got up, and of being in the secret of every string and pin and hook and eye, and of saying it ain't half as real as you think, and I could look quite as well myself if I took the pains! To hear that provoking precious little scream when the chair was hoisted on its poles, and to catch that transient but not-to-be-forgotten vision of the happy face within—what torments and aggravations, and yet what delights were these! The very chairmen seemed favoured rivals as they bore her down the street.

There never was such an alteration in a small room in a small time as in that parlour when they went back to finish tea. So dark, so deserted, so perfectly disenchanted. It seemed such sheer nonsense to be sitting tamely there, when she was at a dance with more lovers than man could calculate fluttering about her—with the whole party doting on and adoring her, and wanting to marry her. Miggs was hovering about too; and the fact of her existence, the mere circumstance of her ever having been born, appeared, after Dolly, such an unaccountable practical joke. It was impossible to talk. It



couldn't be done. He had nothing left for it but to stir his tea round, and round, and round, and ruminate on all the fascinations of the locksmith's lovely daughter.

Gabriel was dull too. It was a part of the certain uncertainty of Mrs. Varden's temper, that when they were in this condition, she should be gay and sprightly.

"I need have a cheerful disposition, I am sure," said the smiling housewife, "to preserve any spirits at all; and how I do it I can scarcely tell."

"Ah, mim," sighed Miggs, "begging your pardon for the interruption, there an't a many like you."

"Take away, Miggs," said Mrs. Varden, rising, "take away, pray. I know I'm a restraint here, and as I wish everybody to enjoy themselves as they best can, I feel I had better go."

"No, no, Martha," cried the locksmith. "Stop here. I'm sure we shall be very sorry to lose you, eh, Joe?" Joe started and said "Certainly."

"Thank you, Varden, my dear," returned his wife; "but I know your wishes better. Tobacco and beer, or spirits, have much greater attractions than any I can boast of, and therefore I shall go and sit up-stairs and look out of window, my love. Good night, Mr. Joseph. I'm very glad to have seen you, and only wish I could have provided something more suitable to your taste. Remember me very kindly, if you please, to old Mr. Willet, and tell him that whenever he comes here I have a crow to pluck with him. Good night!"

Having uttered these words with great sweetness of manner, the good lady dropped a curtsy remarkable for its condescension, and serenely withdrew.

And it was for this Joe had looked forward to the twenty-fifth of March for weeks and weeks, and had gathered the flowers with so much care, and had cocked his hat, and made himself so smart! This was the end of all his bold determination, resolved upon for the hundredth time, to speak out to Dolly and tell her how he loved her! To see her for a minute—for but a minute—to find her going out to a party, and glad to go; to be looked upon as a common pipe-smoker, beer-bibber, spirit-guzzler, and toss-pot! He bade farewell to his friend the locksmith, and hastened to take horse at the Black Lion, thinking as he turned towards home, as many another Joe has thought before and since, that here was an end to all his hopes—that the thing was impossible, and never could be—that she didn't care for him—that he was wretched for

life—and that the only congenial prospect left him was to go for a soldier or a sailor, and get some obliging enemy to knock his brains out as soon as possible.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

**J**OE WILLET rode leisurely along in his desponding mood, picturing the locksmith's daughter going down long country dances, and poussetting dreadfully with bold strangers—which was almost too much to bear—when he heard the tramp of a horse's feet behind him, and looking back, saw a well-mounted gentleman advancing at a smart canter. As this rider passed, he checked his steed, and called him of the Maypole by his name. Joe set spurs to the grey mare, and was at his side directly.

"I thought it was you, sir," he said, touching his hat. "A fair evening, sir. Glad to see you out of doors again."

The gentleman smiled and nodded. "What gay doings have been going on to-day, Joe? Is she as pretty as ever? Nay, don't blush, man."

"If I coloured at all, Mr. Edward," said Joe, "which I didn't know I did, it was to think I should have been such a fool as ever to have any hope of her. She's as far out of my reach as— as Heaven is."

"Well, Joe, I hope that's not altogether beyond it," said Edward good-humouredly. "Eh?"

"Ah!" sighed Joe. "It's all very fine talking, sir. Proverbs are easily made in cold blood. But it can't be helped. Are you bound for our house, sir?"

"Yes. As I am not quite strong yet, I shall stay there to-night, and ride home coolly in the morning."

"If you're in no particular hurry," said Joe after a short silence, "and will bear with the pace of this poor jade, I shall be glad to ride on with you to the Warren, sir, and hold your horse when you dismount. It'll save you having to walk from the Maypole, there and back again. I can spare the time well, sir, for I am too soon."

"And so am I," returned Edward, "though I was unconsciously riding fast just now, in compliment, I suppose, to the pace of my thoughts, which were travelling post. We will keep together, Joe, willingly, and be as good company as may be. And cheer up, cheer up;

think of the locksmith's daughter with a stout heart, and you shall win her yet."

Joe shook his head; but there was something so cheery in the buoyant hopeful manner of this speech, that his spirits rose under its influence, and communicated, as it would seem, some new impulse even to the grey mare, who, breaking from her sober amble into a gentle trot, emulated the pace of Edward Chester's horse, and appeared to flatter herself that he was doing his very best.

It was a fine dry night, and the light of a young moon, which was then just rising, shed around that peace and tranquillity which gives to evening-time its most delicious charm. The lengthened shadows of the trees, softened as if reflected in still water, threw their carpet on the path the travellers pursued, and the light wind stirred yet more softly than before, as though it were soothing nature in her sleep. By little and little they ceased talking, and rode on side by side in a pleasant silence.

"The Maypole lights are brilliant to-night," said Edward as they rode along the lane from which, while the intervening trees were bare of leaves, that hostelry was visible.

"Brilliant indeed, sir," returned Joe, rising in his stirrups to get a better view. "Lights in the large room, and a fire glimmering in the best bedchamber? Why, what company can this be for, I wonder?"

"Some benighted horseman wending towards London, and deterred from going on to-night by the marvellous tales of my friend the highwayman, I suppose," said Edward.

"He must be a horseman of good quality to have such accommodations. Your bed too, sir!"

"No matter, Joe. Any other room will do for me. But come—there's nine striking. We may push on."

They cantered forward at as brisk a pace as Joe's charger could attain, and presently stopped in the little copse where he had left her in the morning. Edward dismounted, gave his bridle to his companion, and walked with a light step towards the house.

A female servant was waiting at a side-gate in the garden-wall, and admitted him without delay. He hurried along the terrace walk, and darted up a flight of broad steps leading into an old and gloomy hall, whose walls were ornamented with rusty suits of armour, antlers, weapons of the chase, and such-like garniture. Here he paused, but not long; for as he looked round, as if expecting the attendant to have followed, and wondering she had not done so, a lovely

girl appeared, whose dark hair next moment rested on his breast. Almost at the same instant a heavy hand was laid upon her arm, Edward felt himself thrust away, and Mr. Haredale stood between them.

He regarded the young man sternly without removing his hat; with one hand clasped his niece, and with the other, in which he held his riding whip, motioned him towards the door. The young man drew himself up, and returned his gaze.

"This is well done of you, sir, to corrupt my servants, and enter my house unbidden and in secret, like a thief!" said Mr. Haredale. "Leave it, sir, and return no more."

"Miss Haredale's presence," returned the young man, "and your relationship to her, give you a licence which, if you are a brave man, you will not abuse. You have compelled me to this course, and the fault is yours—not mine."

"It is neither generous, nor honourable, nor the act of a true man, sir," retorted the other, "to tamper with the affections of a weak, trusting girl, while you shrink, in your unworthiness, from her guardian and protector, and dare not meet the light of day. More than this I will not say to you, save that I forbid you this house, and require you to be gone."

"It is neither generous, nor honourable, nor the act of a true man to play the spy," said Edward. "Your words imply dishonour, and I reject them with the scorn they merit."

"You will find," said Mr. Haredale calmly, "your trusty go-between in waiting at the gate by which you entered. I have played no spy's part, sir. I chanced to see you pass the gate, and followed. You might have heard me knocking for admission, had you been less swift of foot, or lingered in the garden. Please to withdraw. Your presence here is offensive to me and distressful to my niece." As he said these words, he passed his arm about the waist of the terrified and weeping girl, and drew her closer to him; and though the habitual severity of his manner was scarcely changed, there was yet apparent in the action an air of kindness and sympathy for her distress.

"Mr. Haredale," said Edward, "your arm encircles her on whom I have set my every hope and thought, and to purchase one minute's happiness for whom I would gladly lay down my life; this house is the casket that holds the precious jewel of my existence. Your niece has plighted her faith to me, and I have plighted mine to her. What have I done that you should hold me in this light esteem, and give me these discourteous words?"



"You have done that, sir," answered Mr. Haredale, "which must be undone. You have tied a lover's knot here which must be cut asunder. Take good heed of what I say. Must. I cancel the bond between ye. I reject you, and all of your kith and kin—all the false, hollow, heartless stock."

"High words, sir," said Edward scornfully.

"Words of purpose and meaning, as you will find," replied the other. "Lay them to heart."

"Lay you then, these," said Edward. "Your cold and sullen temper, which chills every breast about you, which turns affection into fear, and changes duty into dread, has forced us on this secret course, repugnant to our nature and our wish, and far more foreign, sir, to us than you. I am not a false, a hollow, or a heartless man; the character is yours, who poorly venture on these injurious terms, against the truth, and under the shelter whereof I reminded you just now. You shall not cancel the bond between us. I will not abandon this pursuit. I rely upon your niece's truth and honour, and set your influence at naught. I leave her with a confidence in her pure faith, which you will never weaken, and with no concern but that I do not leave her in some gentler care."

With that, he pressed her cold hand to his lips, and once more encountering and returning Mr. Haredale's steady look, withdrew.

A few words to Joe as he mounted his horse sufficiently explained what had passed, and renewed all that young gentleman's despondency with tenfold aggravation. They rode back to the Maypole without exchanging a syllable, and arrived at the door with heavy hearts.

Old John, who had peeped from behind the red curtain as they rode up shouting for Hugh, was out directly, and said with great importance, as he held the young man's stirrup,

"He's comfortable in bed—the best bed. A thorough gentleman; the smilingest, affablest gentleman I ever had to do with."

"Who, Willet?" said Edward carelessly as he dismounted.

"Your worthy father, sir," replied John. "Your honourable, venerable father."

"What does he mean?" said Edward, looking with a mixture of alarm and doubt at Joe.

"What *do* you mean?" said Joe. "Don't you see Mr. Edward doesn't understand, father?"

"Why, didn't you know of it, sir?" said John, opening his eyes wide. "How very singular! Bless you, he's been here ever since noon to-day, and Mr. Haredale has been having a long talk with him, and hasn't been gone an hour."

"My father, Willet!"

"Yes, sir, he told me so—a handsome, slim, upright gentleman, in green and gold. In your old room up yonder, sir. No doubt you can go in, sir," said John, walking backwards into the road, and looking up at the window. "He hasn't put out his candles yet. I see."

Edward glanced at the window also, and hastily murmuring that he had changed his mind—forgotten something—and must return to London, mounted his horse again and rode away; leaving the Willets, father and son, looking at each other in mute astonishment.

## CHAPTER XV.

**A**T noon next day John Willet's guest sat lingering over his breakfast in his own home, surrounded by a variety of comforts, which left the Maypole's highest flight and utmost stretch of accommodation at an infinite distance behind, and suggested comparisons very much to the disadvantage and disfavour of that venerable tavern.

In the broad old-fashioned window-seat—as capacious as many modern sofas, and cushioned to serve the purpose of a luxurious settee—in the broad old-fashioned window-seat of a roomy chamber Mr. Chester lounged, very much at his ease, over a well-furnished breakfast-table. He had exchanged his riding coat for a handsome morning gown, his boots for slippers; had been at great pains to atone for the having been obliged to make his toilet when he rose without the aid of dressing-case and tiring equipage; and, having gradually forgotten through these means the discomforts of an indifferent night and an early ride, was in a state of perfect complacency, indolence, and satisfaction.

The situation in which he found himself, indeed, was particularly favourable to the growth of these feelings; for, not to mention the lazy influence of a late and lonely breakfast, with the additional sedative of a newspaper, there was an air of repose about his place of residence peculiar to itself, and which hangs about it, even in these times, when it is more bustling and busy than it was in days of yore.

There are, still, worse places than the Temple, on a sultry day, for basking in the sun, or resting idly in the shade. There is yet a drowsiness in its courts, and a dreamy dulness in its trees and gardens: those who pace its lanes and squares may yet hear the echoes of their footsteps on

the sounding stones, and read upon its gates, in passing from the tumult of the Strand or Fleet Street, "Who enters here leaves noise behind." There is still the splash of falling water in fair Fountain Court, and there are yet nooks and corners where dun-haunted students may look down from their dusty garrets on a vagrant ray of sun-light patching the shade of the tall houses, and seldom troubled to reflect a passing stranger's form. There is yet, in the Temple, something of a clerly monkish atmosphere, which public offices of law have not disturbed, and even legal firms have failed to scare away. In summer-time its pumps suggest, to thirsty idlers, springs cooler, and more sparkling, and deeper than other wells; and as they trace the spillings of full pitchers on the heated ground, they sniff the freshness, and, sighing, cast sad looks towards the Thames, and think of baths and boats, and saunter on, despondent.

It was in a room in Paper Buildings—a row of goodly tenements, shaded in front by ancient trees, and looking, at the back, upon the Temple Gardens—that this, our idler, lounged; now taking up again the paper he had laid down a hundred times; now trifling with the fragments of his meal; now pulling forth his golden tooth-pick, and glancing leisurely about the room, or out at window into the trim garden walks, where a few early loiterers were already pacing to and fro. Here a pair of lovers met to quarrel and make up; there a dark-eyed nursery-maid had better eyes for Templars than her charge; on this hand an ancient spinster, with her lap-dog in a string, regarded both enormities with scornful sidelong looks; on that a weazen old gentleman, ogling the nursery-maid, looked with like scorn upon the spinster, and wondered she didn't know she was no longer young. Apart from all these, on the river's margin two or three couple of business talkers walked slowly up and down in earnest conversation; and one young man sat thoughtfully on a bench alone.

"Ned is amazingly patient!" said Mr. Chester, glancing at this last-named person as he set down his teacup and plied the golden tooth-pick, "immensely patient! He was sitting yonder when I began to dress, and has scarcely changed his posture since. A most eccentric dog!"

As he spoke, the figure rose, and came towards him with a rapid pace.

"Really, as if he had heard me," said the father, resuming his newspaper with a yawn. "Dear Ned!"

Presently the room-door opened, and the young man entered; to whom his father gently waved his hand, and smiled.

"Are you at leisure for a little conversation, sir?" said Edward.

"Surely, Ned. I am always at leisure. You know my constitution.—Have you breakfasted?"

"Three hours ago."

"What a very early dog!" cried his father, contemplating him from behind the toothpick with a languid smile.

"The truth is," said Edward, bringing a chair forward, and seating himself near the table, "that I slept but ill last night, and was glad to rise. The cause of my uneasiness cannot but be known to you, sir; and it is upon that I wish to speak."

"My dear boy," returned his father, "confide in me, I beg. But you know my constitution—don't be prosy, Ned."

"I will be plain, and brief," said Edward.

"Don't say you will, my good fellow," returned his father, crossing his legs, "or you certainly will not. You are going to tell me——"

"Plainly this, then," said the son with an air of great concern, "that I know where you were last night—from being on the spot, indeed—and whom you saw, and what your purpose was."

"You don't say so!" cried his father. "I am delighted to hear it. It saves us the worry, and terrible wear and tear, of a long explanation, and is a great relief for both. At the very house! Why didn't you come up? I should have been charmed to see you."

"I knew that what I had to say would be better said after a night's reflection, when both of us were cool," returned the son.

"Fore Gad, Ned," rejoined the father, "I was cool enough last night. That detestable Maypole! By some infernal contrivance of the builder, it holds the wind and keeps it fresh. You remember the sharp east wind that blew so hard five weeks ago? I give you my honour it was rampant in that old house last night, though out of doors there was a dead calm. But you were saying——"

"I was about to say, Heaven knows how seriously and earnestly, that you have made me wretched, sir. Will you hear me gravely for a moment?"

"My dear Ned," said his father, "I will hear you with the patience of an anchorite. Oblige me with the milk."

"I saw Miss Haredale last night," Edward resumed when he had complied with this request; "her uncle, in her presence, immediately after your interview, and, as of course, I know, in consequence of it, forbade me the house, and,



with circumstances of indignity which are of your creation I am sure, commanded me to leave it on the instant."

"For his manner of doing so I give you my honour, Ned, I am not accountable," said his father. "That you must excuse. He is a mere boor, a log, a brute, with no address in life.—Positively a fly in the jug. The first I have seen this year."

Edward rose, and paced the room. His imperturbable parent sipped his tea.

"Father," said the young man, stopping at length before him, "we must not trifle in this matter. We must not deceive each other, or ourselves. Let me pursue the manly, open part I wish to take, and do not repel me by this unkind indifference."

"Whether I am indifferent or no," returned the other, "I leave you, my dear boy, to judge. A ride of twenty-five or thirty miles through miry roads—a Maypole dinner—a tête-à-tête with Haredale, which, vanity apart, was quite a Valentine and Orson business—a Maypole bed—a Maypole landlord, and a Maypole retinue of idiots and centaurs;—whether the voluntary endurance of these things looks like indifference, dear Ned, or like the excessive anxiety, and devotion, and all that sort of thing, of a parent, you shall determine for yourself."

"I wish you to consider, sir," said Edward, "in what a cruel situation I am placed. Loving Miss Haredale as I do——"

"My dear fellow," interrupted his father with a compassionate smile, "you do nothing of the kind. You don't know anything about it. There's no such thing, I assure you. Now, do take my word for it. You have good sense, Ned,—great good sense. I wonder you should be guilty of such amazing absurdities. You really surprise me."

"I repeat," said his son firmly, "that I love her. You have interposed to part us, and have, to the extent I have just now told you of, succeeded. May I induce you, sir, in time, to think more favourably of our attachment, or is it your intention and your fixed design to hold us asunder if you can?"

"My dear Ned," returned his father, taking a pinch of snuff and pushing his box towards him, "that is my purpose most undoubtedly."

"The time that has elapsed," rejoined his son, "since I began to know her worth, has flown in such a dream that until now I have hardly once paused to reflect upon my true position. What is it? From my childhood I have been accustomed to luxury and idleness, and have been bred as though my fortune were

large, and my expectations almost without a limit. The idea of wealth has been familiarised to me from my cradle. I have been taught to look upon those means, by which men raise themselves to riches and distinction, as being beyond my heeding, and beneath my care. I have been, as the phrase is, liberally educated, and am fit for nothing. I find myself at last wholly dependent upon you, with no resource but in your favour. In this momentous question of my life we do not, and it would seem we never can, agree. I have shrunk instinctively alike from those to whom you have urged me to pay court, and from the motives of interest and gain which have rendered them in your eyes visible objects for my suit. If there never has been thus much plain-speaking between us before, sir, the fault has not been mine, indeed. If I seem to speak too plainly now, it is, believe me, father, in the hope that there may be a franker spirit, a worthier reliance, and a kinder confidence between us in time to come."

"My good fellow," said his smiling father, "you quite affect me. Go on, my dear Edward, I beg. But remember your promise. There is great earnestness, vast candour, a manifest sincerity in all you say, but I fear I observe the faintest indications of a tendency to prose."

"I am very sorry, sir."

"I am very sorry too, Ned, but you know that I cannot fix my mind for any long period upon one subject. If you'll come to the point at once, I'll imagine all that ought to go before, and conclude it said. Oblige me with the milk again. Listening invariably makes me feverish."

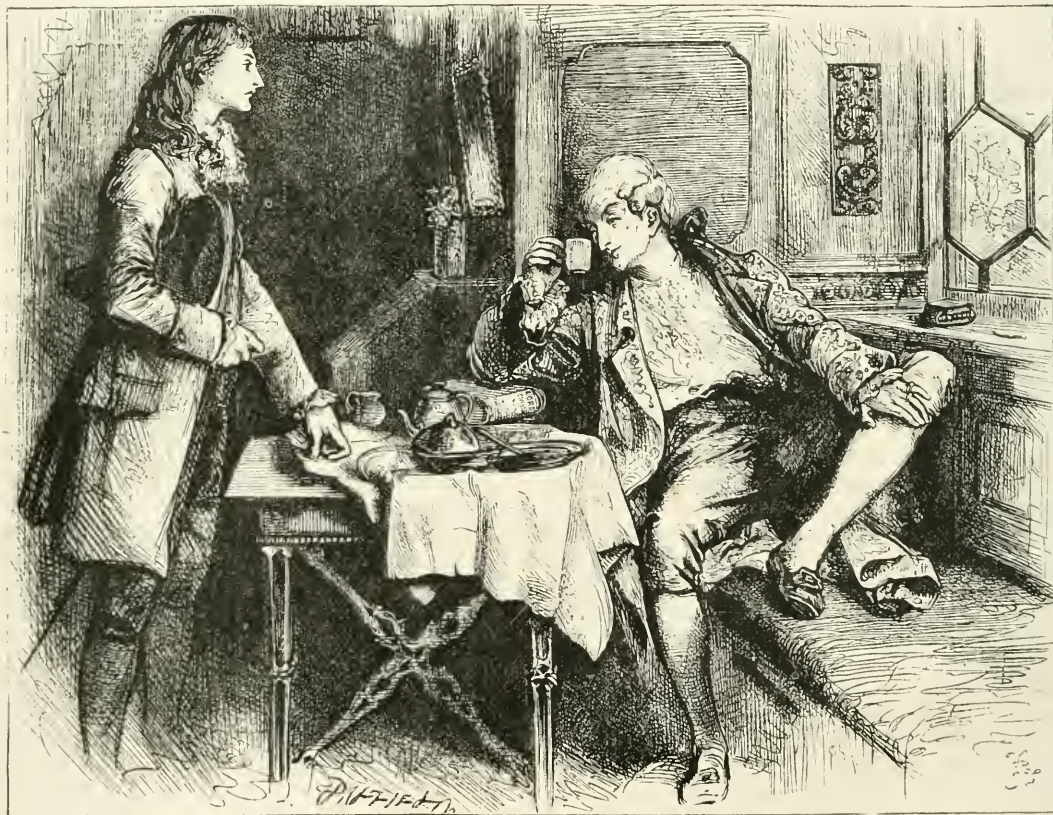
"What I would say, then, tends to this," said Edward. "I cannot bear this absolute dependence, sir, even upon you. Time has been lost and opportunity thrown away, but I am yet a young man, and may retrieve it. Will you give me the means of devoting such abilities and energies as I possess to some worthy pursuit? Will you let me try to make for myself an honourable path in life? For any term you please to name—say for five years if you will—I will pledge myself to move no further in the matter of our difference without your full concurrence. During that period I will endeavour earnestly and patiently, if ever man did, to open some prospect for myself, and free you from the burden you fear I should become if I married one whose worth and beauty are her chief endowments. Will you do this, sir? At the expiration of the term we agree upon, let us discuss this subject again. Till then, unless it is revived by you, let it never be renewed between us."

"My dear Ned," returned his father, laying down the newspaper at which he had been glancing carelessly, and throwing himself back in the window-seat, "I believe you know how very much I dislike what are called family affairs, which are only fit for plebeian Christmas-days, and have no manner of business with people of our condition. But as you are proceeding upon a mistake, Ned—altogether upon a mistake—I will conquer my repugnance to entering on such matters, and give you a per-

fectly plain and candid answer, if you will do me the favour to shut the door."

Edward having obeyed him, he took an elegant little knife from his pocket, and paring his nails, continued :

"You have to thank me, Ned, for being of good family ; for your mother, charming person as she was, and almost broken-hearted, and so forth, as she left me, when she was prematurely compelled to become immortal—had nothing to boast of in that respect."



FATHER AND SON.

"Her father was at least an eminent lawyer, sir," said Edward.

"Quite right, Ned ; perfectly so. He stood high at the bar, had a great name and great wealth, but having risen from nothing—I have always closed my eyes to the circumstance, and steadily resisted its contemplation, but I fear his father dealt in pork, and that his business did once involve cowheel and sausages—he wished to marry his daughter into a good family. He had his heart's desire, Ned. I

was a younger son's younger son, and I married her. We each had our object, and gained it. She stepped at once into the politest and best circles, and I stepped into a fortune which I assure you was very necessary to my comfort—quite indispensable. Now, my good fellow, that fortune is among the things that have been. It is gone, Ned, and has been gone—How old are you ? I always forget."

"Seven-and-twenty, sir."

"Are you indeed ?" cried his father, raising



his eyelids in a languishing surprise. "So much! Then I should say, Ned, that, as nearly as I remember, its skirts vanished from human knowledge about eighteen or nineteen years ago. It was about that time when I came to live in these chambers (once your grandfather's, and bequeathed by that extremely respectable person to me), and commenced to live upon an inconsiderable annuity and my past reputation."

"You are jesting with me, sir," said Edward.

"Not in the slightest degree, I assure you," returned his father with great composure. "These family topics are so extremely dry, that I am sorry to say they don't admit of any such relief. It is for that reason, and because they have an appearance of business, that I dislike them so very much. Well! You know the rest. A son, Ned, unless he is old enough to be a companion—that is to say, unless he is some two or three and twenty—is not the kind of thing to have about one. He is a restraint upon his father, his father is a restraint upon him, and they make each other mutually uncomfortable. Therefore, until within the last four years or so—I have a poor memory for dates, and, if I mistake, you will correct me in your own mind—you pursued your studies at a distance, and picked up a great variety of accomplishments. Occasionally we passed a week or two together here, and disconcerted each other as only such near relations can. At last you came home. I candidly tell you, my dear boy, that if you had been awkward and overgrown, I should have exported you to some distant part of the world."

"I wish with all my soul you had, sir," said Edward.

"No, you don't, Ned," rejoined his father coolly; "you are mistaken, I assure you. I found you a handsome, prepossessing, elegant fellow, and I threw you into the society I can still command. Having done that, my dear fellow, I consider that I have provided for you in life, and rely on your doing something to provide for me in return."

"I do not understand your meaning, sir."

"My meaning, Ned, is obvious—I observe another fly in the cream-jug, but have the goodness not to take it out, as you did the first, for their walk, when their legs are milky, is extremely ungraceful and disagreeable—my meaning is, that you must do as I did; that you must marry well, and make the most of yourself."

"A mere fortune-hunter!" cried the son indignantly.

"What in the devil's name, Ned, would you

be?" returned the father. "All men are fortune-hunters, are they not? The law, the church, the court, the camp—see how they are all crowded with fortune-hunters, jostling each other in the pursuit. The Stock Exchange, the pulpit, the counting-house, the royal drawing-room, the Senate,—what but fortune-hunters are they filled with? A fortune-hunter! Yes. You *are* one; and you would be nothing else, my dear Ned, if you were the greatest courtier, lawyer, legislator, prelate, or merchant in existence. If you are squeamish and moral, Ned, console yourself with the reflection that at the worst your fortune-hunting can make but one person miserable or unhappy. How many people do you suppose these other kinds of huntsmen crush in following their sport—hundreds at a step? Or thousands?"

The young man leant his head upon his hand, and made no answer.

"I am quite charmed," said the father, rising, and walking slowly to and fro—stopping now and then to glance at himself in a mirror, or survey a picture through his glass with the air of a connoisseur, "that we have had this conversation, Ned, unpromising as it was. It establishes a confidence between us which is quite delightful, and was certainly necessary, though how you can ever have mistaken our position and designs, I confess I cannot understand. I conceived, until I found your fancy for this girl, that all these points were tacitly agreed upon between us."

"I knew you were embarrassed, sir," returned the son, raising his head for a moment, and then falling into his former attitude, "but I had no idea we were the beggared wretches you describe. How could I suppose it, bred as I have been; witnessing the life you have always led; and the appearance you have always made?"

"My dear child," said the father—"for you really talk so like a child that I must call you one—you were bred upon a careful principle; the very manner of your education, I assure you, maintained my credit surprisingly. As to the life I lead, I must lead it, Ned. I must have these little refinements about me. I have always been used to them, and I cannot exist without them. They must surround me, you observe, and therefore they are here. With regard to our circumstances, Ned, you may set your mind at rest upon that score. They are desperate. Your own appearance is by no means despicable, and our joint pocket money alone devours our income. That's the truth."

"Why have I never known this before? Why have you encouraged me, sir, to an ex-

penditure and mode of life to which we have no right or title?"

"My good fellow," returned his father, more compassionately than ever, "if you made no appearance, how could you possibly succeed in the pursuit for which I destined you? As to our mode of life, every man has a right to live in the best way he can; and to make himself as comfortable as he can, or he is an unnatural scoundrel. Our debts, I grant, are very great, and therefore it the more behoves you, as a young man of principle and honour, to pay them off as speedily as possible."

"The villain's part," muttered Edward, "that I have unconsciously played! I to win the heart of Emma Haredale! I would, for her sake, I had died first!"

"I am glad you see, Ned," returned his father, "how perfectly self-evident it is that nothing can be done in that quarter. But apart from this, and the necessity of your speedily bestowing yourself in another (as you know you could to-morrow, if you chose), I wish you would look upon it pleasantly. In a religious point of view alone, how could you ever think of uniting yourself to a Catholic, unless she was amazingly rich? You who ought to be so very Protestant, coming of such a Protestant family as you do. Let us be moral, Ned, or we are nothing. Even if one could set that objection aside, which is impossible, we come to another which is quite conclusive. The very idea of marrying a girl whose father was killed, like meat! Good God, Ned, how disagreeable! Consider the impossibility of having any respect for your father-in-law under such unpleasant circumstances—think of his having been 'viewed' by jurors, and 'sat upon' by coroners, and of his very doubtful position in the family ever afterwards. It seems to me such an indelicate sort of thing that I really think the girl ought to have been put to death by the state to prevent its happening. But I tease you perhaps. You would rather be alone. My dear Ned, most willingly. God bless you! I shall be going out presently, but we shall meet to-night, or, if not to-night, certainly to-morrow. Take care of yourself in the meantime for both our sakes. You are a person of great consequence to me, Ned—of vast consequence indeed. God bless you!"

With these words, the father, who had been arranging his cravat in the glass while he uttered them in a disconnected careless manner, withdrew, humming a tune as he went. The son, who had appeared so lost in thought as not to hear or understand them, remained quite still and silent. After the lapse of half an hour or

so, the elder Chester, gaily dressed, went out. The younger still sat with his head resting on his hands, in what appeared to be a kind of stupor.

## CHAPTER XVI.



**A**SERIES of pictures representing the streets of London in the night, even at the comparatively recent date of this tale, would present to the eye something so very different in character from the reality which is witnessed in these times, that it would be difficult for the beholder to recognise his most familiar walks in the altered aspect of little more than half a century ago.

They were, one and all, from the broadest and best to the narrowest and least frequented, very dark. The oil and cotton lamps, though regularly trimmed twice or thrice in the long winter nights, burnt feebly at the best; and at a late hour, when they were unassisted by the lamps and candles in the shops, cast but a narrow track of doubtful light upon the footway, leaving the projecting doors and house-fronts in the deepest gloom. Many of the courts and lanes were left in total darkness; those of the meaner sort, where one glimmering light twinkled for a score of houses, being favoured in no slight degree. Even in these places the inhabitants had often good reason for extinguishing their lamp as soon as it was lighted; and the watch being utterly inefficient and powerless to prevent them, they did so at their pleasure. Thus, in the lightest thoroughfares, there was at every turn some obscure and dangerous spot whither a thief might fly for shelter, and few would care to follow; and the City being belted round by fields, green lanes, waste grounds, and lonely roads, dividing it at that time from the suburbs that have joined it since, escape, even where the pursuit was hot, was rendered easy.

It is no wonder that, with these favouring circumstances in full and constant operation, street robberies, often accompanied by cruel wounds, and not unfrequently by loss of life, should have been of nightly occurrence in the very heart of London, or that quiet folks should have had great dread of traversing its streets after the shops were closed. It was not unusual, for those who wended home alone at midnight, to keep the middle of the road, the better to guard against surprise from lurking footpads; few would venture to repair at a late hour to Kentish Town or Hampstead, or even to Ken-



sington or Chelsea, unarmed and unattended ; while he who had been loudest and most valiant at the supper-table, or the tavern, and had but a mile or so to go, was glad to see a link-boy to escort him home.

There were many other characteristics—not quite so disagreeable—about the thoroughfares of London then, with which they had been long familiar. Some of the shops, especially those to the eastward of Temple Bar, still adhered to the old practice of hanging out a sign ; and the creaking and swinging of these boards in their iron frames, on windy nights, formed a strange and mournful concert for the ears of those who lay awake in bed—or hurried through the streets. Long stands of hackney chairs and groups of chairmen, compared with whom the coachmen of our day are gentle and polite, obstructed the way and filled the air with clamour ; night-cellars, indicated by a little stream of light crossing the pavement, and stretching out half-way into the road, and by the stifled roar of voices from below, yawned for the reception and entertainment of the most abandoned of both sexes ; under every shed and bulk small groups of link-boys gamed away the earnings of the day ; or one more weary than the rest gave way to sleep, and let the fragment of his torch fall hissing on the puddled ground.

Then there was the watch, with staff and lantern, crying the hour and the kind of weather ; and those who woke up at his voice, and turned them round in bed, were glad to hear it rained, or snowed, or blew, or froze, for very comfort's sake. The solitary passenger was startled by the chairmen's cry of "By your leave there !" as two came trotting past him with their empty vehicle—carried backwards to show its being disengaged—and hurried to the nearest stand. Many a private chair too, enclosing some fine lady, monstrously hooped and furbelowed, and preceded by running footmen bearing flambeaux—for which extinguishers are yet suspended before the doors of a few houses of the better sort—made the way gay and light as it danced along, and darker and more dismal when it had passed. It was not unusual for these running gentry, who carried it with a very high hand, to quarrel in the servants' hall while waiting for their masters and mistresses ; and, falling to blows either there or in the street without, to strew the place of skirmish with hair powder, fragments of bag-wigs, and scattered nosegays. Gaming, the vice which ran so high among all classes (the fashion being, of course, set by the upper), was generally the cause of these disputes ; for cards and dice were as openly

used, and worked as much mischief, and yielded as much excitement below-stairs as above. While incidents like these, arising out of drums and masquerades and parties at quadrille, were passing at the West-end of the town, heavy stage-coaches and scarce heavier waggons were lumbering slowly towards the City, the coachman, guard, and passengers armed to the teeth, and the coach—a day or so, perhaps, behind its time, but that was nothing—despoiled by highwaymen ; who made no scruple to attack, alone and single-handed, a whole caravan of goods and men, and sometimes shot a passenger or two, and were sometimes shot themselves, just as the case might be. On the morrow, rumours of this new act of daring on the road yielded matter for a few hours' conversation through the town, and a Public Progress of some fine gentleman (half drunk) to Tyburn, dressed in the newest fashion, and damning the ordinary with unspeakable gallantry and grace, furnished to the populace at once a pleasant excitement and a wholesome and profound example.

Among all the dangerous characters who, in such a state of society, prowled and skulked in the metropolis at night, there was one man from whom many as uncouth and fierce as he shrunk with an involuntary dread. Who he was, or whence he came, was a question often asked, but which none could answer. His name was unknown, he had never been seen until within eight days or thereabouts and was equally a stranger to the old ruffians, upon whose haunts he ventured fearlessly, as to the young. He could be no spy, for he never removed his slouched hat to look about him, entered into conversation with no man, heeded nothing that passed, listened to no discourse, regarded nobody that came or went. But so surely as the dead of night set in, so surely this man was in the midst of the loose concourse in the night-cellar where outcasts of every grade resorted ; and there he sat till morning.

He was not only a spectre at their licentious feasts ; a something in the midst of their revelry and riot that chilled and haunted them ; but out of doors he was the same. Directly it was dark, he was abroad—never in company with any one, but always alone ; never lingering or loitering, but always walking swiftly ; and looking (so they said who had seen him) over his shoulder from time to time, and, as he did so, quickening his pace. In the fields, the lanes, the roads, in all quarters of the town—east, west, north, and south—that man was seen gliding on like a shadow. He was always hurrying away. Those who encountered him

saw him steal past, caught sight of the backward glance, and so lost him in the darkness.

This constant restlessness and flitting to and fro gave rise to strange stories. He was seen in such distant and remote places, at times so nearly tallying with each other, that some doubted whether there were not two of them, or more—some, whether he had not unearthly means of travelling from spot to spot. The footpad hiding in a ditch had marked him passing like a ghost along its brink; the vagrant had met him on the dark high-road; the beggar

had seen him pause upon the bridge to look down at the water, and then sweep on again; they who dealt in bodies with the surgeons could swear he slept in churchyards, and that they had beheld him glide away among the tombs on their approach. And as they told these stories to each other, one who had looked about him would pull his neighbour by the sleeve, and there he would be among them.

At last, one man—he was of those whose commerce lay among the graves—resolved to question this strange companion. Next night,



“COME, COME, MASTER,” CRIED THE FELLOW, URGED ON BY THE LOOKS OF HIS COMRADES, AND SLAPPING HIM ON THE SHOULDER; “BE MORE COMPANIONABLE AND COMMUNICATIVE. BE MORE THE GENTLEMAN IN THIS GOOD COMPANY.”

when he had eat his poor meal voraciously (he was accustomed to do that, they had observed, as though he had no other in the day), this fellow sat down at his elbow.

“A black night, master!”

“It is a black night!”

“Blacker than last, though that was pitchy too. Didn’t I pass you near the turnpike in the Oxford Road?”

“It’s like you may. I don’t know.”

“Come, come, master,” cried the fellow, urged on by the looks of his comrades, and slapping

him on the shoulder; “be more companionable and communicative. Be more the gentleman in this good company. There are tales among us that you have sold yourself to the devil, and I know not what.”

“We all have, have we not?” returned the stranger, looking up. “If we were fewer in number, perhaps he would give better wages.”

“It goes rather hard with you, indeed,” said the fellow, as the stranger disclosed his haggard unwashed face and torn clothes. “What of



that? Be merry, master. A stave of a roaring song, now——”

“Sing you, if you desire to hear one,” replied the other, shaking him roughly off; “and don’t touch me if you’re a prudent man; I carry arms which go off easily—they have done so before now—and make it dangerous for strangers who don’t know the trick of them to lay hands upon me.”

“Do you threaten?” said the fellow.

“Yes,” returned the other, rising and turning upon him, and looking fiercely round as if in apprehension of a general attack.

His voice, and look, and bearing—all expressive of the wildest recklessness and desperation—daunted while they repelled the bystanders. Although in a very different sphere of action now, they were not without much of the effect they had wrought at the Maypole Inn.

“I am what you all are, and live as you all do,” said the man sternly after a short silence. “I am in hiding here like the rest, and, if we were surprised, would perhaps do my part with the best of ye. If it’s my humour to be left to myself, let me have it. Otherwise,”—and here he swore a tremendous oath,—“there’ll be mischief done in this place, though there *are* odds of a score against me.”

A low murmur, having its origin perhaps in a dread of the man and the mystery that surrounded him, or perhaps in a sincere opinion, on the part of some of those present, that it would be an inconvenient precedent to meddle too curiously with a gentleman’s private affairs if he saw reason to conceal them, warned the fellow who had occasioned this discussion that he had best pursue it no further. After a short time the strange man lay down upon a bench to sleep, and when they thought of him again, they found that he was gone.

Next night, as soon as it was dark, he was abroad again and traversing the streets; he was before the locksmith’s house more than once, but the family were out, and it was close shut. This night he crossed London Bridge and passed into Southwark. As he glided down a by-street, a woman with a little basket on her arm turned into it at the other end. Directly he observed her, he sought the shelter of an archway, and stood aside until she had passed. Then he emerged cautiously from his hiding-place, and followed.

She went into several shops to purchase various kinds of household necessaries, and round every place at which she stopped he hovered like her evil spirit; following her when she reappeared. It was nigh eleven o’clock,

and the passengers in the streets were thinning fast, when she turned, doubtless to go home. The phantom still followed her.

She turned into the same by-street in which he had seen her first, which, being free from shops, and narrow, was extremely dark. She quickened her pace here, as though distrustful of being stopped, and robbed of such trifling property as she carried with her. He crept along on the other side of the road. Had she been gifted with the speed of wind, it seemed as if his terrible shadow would have tracked her down.

At length the widow—for she it was—reached her own door, and, panting for breath, paused to take the key from her basket. In a flush and glow with the haste she had made, and the pleasure of being safe at home, she stooped to draw it out, when, raising her head, she saw him standing silently beside her; the apparition of a dream.

His hand was on her mouth, but that was needless, for her tongue clove to its roof, and her power of utterance was gone. “I have been looking for you many nights. Is the house empty? Answer me. Is any one inside?”

She could only answer by a rattle in her throat.

“Make me a sign.”

She seemed to indicate that there was no one there. He took the key, unlocked the door, carried her in, and secured it carefully behind them.

## CHAPTER XVII.

**I**T was a chilly night, and the fire in the widow’s parlour had burnt low. Her strange companion placed her in a chair, and stooping down before the half-extinguished ashes, raked them together and fanned them with his hat. From time to time he glanced at her over his shoulder, as though to assure himself of her remaining quiet and making no effort to depart; and that done, busied himself about the fire again.

It was not without reason that he took these pains, for his dress was dank and drenched with wet, his jaws rattled with cold, and he shivered from head to foot. It had rained hard during the previous night, and for some hours in the morning, but since noon it had been fine. Wheresoever he had passed the hours of darkness, his condition sufficiently betokened that many of them had been spent beneath the open

sky. Besmeared with mire ; his saturated clothes clinging with a damp embrace about his limbs ; his beard unshaven, his face unwashed, his meagre cheeks worn into deep hollows,—a more miserable wretch could hardly be than this man who now cowered down upon the widow's hearth, and watched the struggling flame with blood-shot eyes.

She had covered her face with her hands, fearing, as it seemed, to look towards him. So they remained for some short time in silence. Glancing round again, he asked at length :

"Is this your house?"

"It is. Why, in the name of Heaven, do you darken it?"

"Give me meat and drink," he answered sullenly, "or I dare do more than that. The very marrow in my bones is cold with wet and hunger. I must have warmth and food, and I will have them here."

"You were the robber on the Chigwell Road."

"I was."

"And nearly a murderer then."

"The will was not wanting. There was one came upon me and raised the hue-and-cry, that it would have gone hard with, but for his nimbleness. I made a thrust at him."

"You thrust your sword at *him!*" cried the widow, looking upwards. "You hear this man! you hear and saw!"

He looked at her, as, with her head thrown back, and her hands tight clenched together, she uttered these words in an agony of appeal. Then, starting to his feet as she had done, he advanced towards her.

"Beware!" she cried in a suppressed voice, whose firmness stopped him midway. "Do not so much as touch me with a finger, or you are lost; body and soul you are lost."

"Hear me," he replied, menacing her with his hand. "I, that in the form of a man live the life of a hunted beast; that in the body am a spirit, a ghost upon the earth, a thing from which all creatures shrink, save those cursed beings of another world who will not leave me;—I am, in my desperation of this night, past all fear but that of the hell in which I exist from day to day. Give the alarm, cry out, refuse to shelter me. I will not hurt you. But I will not be taken alive; and so surely as you threaten me above your breath, I fall a dead man on this floor. The blood with which I sprinkle it be on you and yours, in the name of the Evil Spirit that tempts men to their ruin!"

As he spoke, he took a pistol from his breast, and firmly clutched it in his hand.

"Remove this man from me, good Heaven!" cried the widow. "In thy grace and mercy, give him one minute's penitence, and strike him dead!"

"It has no such purpose," he said, confronting her. "It is deaf. Give me to eat and drink, lest I do that it cannot help my doing, and will not do for you."

"Will you leave me if I do thus much? Will you leave me and return no more?"

"I will promise nothing," he rejoined, seating himself at the table, "nothing but this—I will execute my threat if you betray me."

She rose at length, and going to a closet or pantry in the room, brought out some fragments of cold meat and bread, and put them on the table. He asked for brandy, and for water. These she produced likewise; and he ate and drank with the voracity of a famished hound. All the time he was so engaged she kept at the uttermost distance of the chamber, and sat there shuddering, but with her face towards him. She never turned her back upon him once; and although, when she passed him (as she was obliged to do in going to and from the cupboard), she gathered the skirts of her garment about her, as if even its touching his by chance were horrible to think of, still, in the midst of all this dread and terror, she kept her face directed to his own, and watched his every movement.

His repast ended—if that can be called one which was a mere ravenous satisfying of the calls of hunger—he moved his chair towards the fire again, and warming himself before the blaze which had now sprung brightly up, accosted her once more.

"I am an outcast, to whom a roof above his head is often an uncommon luxury, and the food a beggar would reject is delicate fare. You live here at your ease. Do you live alone?"

"I do not," she made answer with an effort.

"Who dwells here besides?"

"One—it is no matter who. You had best begone, or he may find you here. Why do you linger?"

"For warmth," he replied, spreading out his hands before the fire. "For warmth. You are rich, perhaps?"

"Very," she said faintly. "Very rich. No doubt I am very rich."

"At least you are not penniless. You have some money. You were making purchases to-night."

"I have a little left. It is but a few shillings."

"Give me your purse. You had it in your hand at the door. Give it to me."



She stepped to the table and laid it down. He reached across, took it up, and told the contents into his hand. As he was counting them, she listened for a moment, and sprung towards him.

"Take what there is, take all, take more if more were there, but go before it is too late. I have heard a wayward step without, I know full well. It will return directly. Begone."

"What do you mean?"

"Do not stop to ask. I will not answer. Much as I dread to touch you, I would drag you to the door if I possessed the strength, rather than you should lose an instant. Miserable wretch! fly from this place."

"If there are spies without, I am safer here," replied the man, standing aghast. "I will remain here, and will not fly till the danger is past."

"It is too late!" cried the widow, who had listened for the step, and not to him. "Hark to that foot upon the ground. Do you tremble to hear it? It is my son, my idiot son!"

As she said this wildly, there came a heavy knocking at the door. He looked at her, and she at him.

"Let him come in," said the man hoarsely. "I fear him less than the dark, houseless night. He knocks again. Let him come in!"

"The dread of this hour," returned the widow, "has been upon me all my life, and I will not. Evil will fall upon him, if you stand eye to eye. My blighted boy! Oh! all good angels who know the truth, hear a poor mother's prayer, and spare my boy from knowledge of this man!"

"He rattles at the shutters!" cried the man. "He calls you. That voice and cry! It was he who grappled with me in the road. Was it he?"

She had sunk upon her knees, and so knelt down, moving her lips, but uttering no sound. As he gazed upon her, uncertain what to do or where to turn, the shutters flew open. He had barely time to catch a knife from the table, sheathe it in the loose sleeve of his coat, hide in the closet, and do all with a lightning's speed, when Barnaby tapped at the bare glass, and raised the sash exultingly.

"Why, who can keep out Grip and me?" he cried, thrusting in his head, and staring round the room. "Are you there, mother? How long you keep us from the fire and light!"

She stammered some excuse, and tendered him her hand. But Barnaby sprung lightly in without assistance, and putting his arms about her neck, kissed her a hundred times.

"We have been afield, mother—leaping ditches, scrambling through hedges, running down steep banks, up and away, and hurrying on. The wind has been blowing, and the rushes and young plants bowing and bending to it, lest it should do them harm, the cowards—and Grip—ha, ha, ha!—brave Grip, who cares for nothing, and, when the wind rolls him over in the dust, turns manfully to bite it—Grip, bold Grip, has quarrelled with every little bowing twig—thinking, he told me, that it mocked him—and has worried it like a bulldog. Ha, ha, ha!"

The raven, in his little basket at his master's back, hearing this frequent mention of his name in a tone of exultation, expressed his sympathy by crowing like a cock, and afterwards running over his various phrases of speech with such rapidity, and in so many varieties of hoarseness, that they sounded like the murmurs of a crowd of people.

"He takes such care of me, besides!" said Barnaby. "Such care, mother! He watches all the time I sleep, and when I shut my eyes and make believe to slumber, he practises new learning softly; but he keeps his eye on me the while, and if he sees me laugh, though never so little, stops directly. He won't surprise me till he's perfect."

The raven crowed again in a rapturous manner which plainly said, "Those are certainly some of my characteristics, and I glory in them." In the meantime, Barnaby closed the window and secured it, and coming to the fire-place, prepared to sit down with his face to the closet. But his mother prevented this by hastily taking that side herself, and motioning him towards the other.

"How pale you are to-night!" said Barnaby, leaning on his stick. "We have been cruel, Grip, and made her anxious."

Anxious in good truth, and sick at heart! The listener held the door of his hiding-place open with his hand, and closely watched her son. Grip—alive to everything his master was unconscious of—had his head out of the basket, and, in return, was watching him intently with his glistening eye.

"He flaps his wings," said Barnaby, turning almost quickly enough to catch the retreating form and closing door, "as if there were strangers here; but Grip is wiser than to fancy that. Jump then!"

Accepting this invitation with a dignity peculiar to himself, the bird hopped up on his master's shoulder, from that to his extended hand, and so to the ground. Barnaby unstrapping

the basket, and putting it down in a corner with the lid open, Grip's first care was to shut it down with all possible dispatch, and then to stand upon it. Believing, no doubt, that he had now rendered it utterly impossible, and beyond the power of mortal man, to shut him up in it any more, he drew a great many corks in triumph, and uttered a corresponding number of hurrahs.

"Mother!" said Barnaby, laying aside his hat and stick, and returning to the chair from which he had risen, "I'll tell you where we have been to-day, and what we have been doing,—shall I?"

She took his hand in hers, and holding it, nodded the word she could not speak.

"You mustn't tell," said Barnaby, holding up his finger, "for it's a secret, mind, and only known to me, and Grip, and Hugh. We had the dog with us, but he's not like Grip, clever as he is, and doesn't guess it yet, I'll wager.—Why do you look behind me so?"

"Did I?" she answered faintly. "I didn't know I did. Come nearer me."

"You are frightened!" said Barnaby, changing colour. "Mother—you don't see——"

"See what?"

"There's—there's none of this about, is there?" he answered in a whisper, drawing closer to her, and clasping the mark upon his wrist. "I am afraid there is, somewhere. You make my hair stand on end, and my flesh creep. Why do you look like that? Is it in the room as I have seen it in my dreams, dashing the ceiling and the walls with red? Tell me. Is it?"

He fell into a shivering fit as he put the question, and shutting out the light with his hands, sat shaking in every limb until it had passed away. After a time he raised his head and looked about him.

"Is it gone?"

"There has been nothing here," rejoined his mother, soothing him. "Nothing indeed, dear Barnaby. Look! You see there are but you and me."

He gazed at her vacantly, and, becoming reassured by degrees, burst into a wild laugh.

"But let us see," he said thoughtfully. "Were we talking? Was it you and me? Where have we been?"

"Nowhere but here."

"Ay, but Hugh, and I," said Barnaby,— "that's it. Maypole Hugh, and I, you know, and Grip—we have been lying in the forest, and among the trees by the roadside, with a dark-lantern after night came on, and the dog

in a noose ready to slip him when the man came by."

"What man?"

"The robber; him that the stars winked at. We have waited for him after dark these many nights, and we shall have him. I'd know him in a thousand. Mother, see here! This is the man. Look!"

He twisted his handkerchief round his head, pulled his hat upon his brow, wrapped his coat about him, and stood up before her: so like the original he counterfeited, that the dark figure peering out behind him might have passed for his own shadow.

"Ha, ha, ha! We shall have him," he cried, ridding himself of the semblance as hastily as he had assumed it. "You shall see him, mother, bound hand and foot, and brought to London at a saddle-girth; and you shall hear of him at Tyburn Tree if we have luck. So Hugh says. You're pale again, and trembling. And why *do* you look behind me so?"

"It is nothing," she answered. "I am not quite well. Go you to bed, dear, and leave me here."

"To bed!" he answered. "I don't like bed. I like to lie before the fire, watching the prospects in the burning coals—the rivers, hills, and dells, in the deep, red sunset, and the wild faces. I am hungry, too, and Grip has eaten nothing since broad noon. Let us to supper. Grip! To supper, lad!"

The raven flapped his wings, and, croaking his satisfaction, hopped to the feet of his master, and there held his bill open, ready for snapping up such lumps of meat as he should throw him. Of these he received about a score in rapid succession without the smallest discomposure.

"That's all," said Barnaby.

"More!" cried Grip. "More!"

But it appearing for a certainty that no more was to be had, he retreated with his store; and disgorging the morsels one by one from his pouch, hid them in various corners—taking particular care, however, to avoid the closet, as being doubtful of the hidden man's propensities and power of resisting temptation. When he had concluded these arrangements, he took a turn or two across the room with an elaborate assumption of having nothing on his mind (but with one eye hard upon his treasure all the time), and then, and not till then, began to drag it out piece by piece, and eat it with the utmost relish.

Barnaby, for his part, having pressed his mother to eat in vain, made a hearty supper



too. Once, during the progress of his meal, he wanted more bread from the closet, and rose to get it. She hurriedly interposed to prevent him, and summoning her utmost fortitude, passed into the recess, and brought it out herself.

"Mother," said Barnaby, looking at her steadfastly as she sat down beside him, after doing so; "is to-day my birthday?"

"To-day!" she answered. "Don't you recollect it was but a week or so ago, and that summer, autumn, and winter have to pass before it comes again?"

"I remember that it has been so till now," said Barnaby. "But I think to-day must be my birthday too, for all that."

She asked him why. "I'll tell you why," he said. "I have always seen you—I didn't let you know it, but I have—on the evening of that day grow very sad. I have seen you cry when Grip and I were most glad; and look frightened with no reason; and I have touched your hand, and felt that it was cold—as it is now. Once, mother (on a birthday that was, also), Grip and I thought of this after we went up-stairs to bed, and when it was midnight, striking one o'clock, we came down to your door to see if you were well. You were on your knees. I forget what it was you said. Grip, what was it we heard her say that night?"

"I'm a devil!" rejoined the raven promptly.

"No, no," said Barnaby. "But you said something in a prayer; and when you rose and walked about, you looked (as you have done ever since, mother, towards night on my birthday), just as you do now. I have found that out, you see, though I am silly. So I say you're wrong; and this must be my birthday—my birthday, Grip!"

The bird received this information with a crow of such duration as a cock, gifted with intelligence beyond all others of his kind, might usher in the longest day with. Then, as if he had well considered the sentiment, and regarded it as apposite to birthdays, he cried, "Never say die!" a great many times, and flapped his wings for emphasis.

The widow tried to make light of Barnaby's remark, and endeavoured to divert his attention to some new subject; too easy a task at all times, as she knew. His supper done, Barnaby, regardless of her entreaties, stretched himself on the mat before the fire; Grip perched upon his leg, and divided his time between dozing in the grateful warmth, and endeavouring (as it presently appeared) to recall a new accomplishment he had been studying all day.

A long and profound silence ensued, broken  
BARNABY RUDGE, 6.

only by some change of position on the part of Barnaby, whose eyes were still wide open and intently fixed upon the fire; or by an effort of recollection on the part of Grip, who would cry in a low voice from time to time, "Polly put the ket—" and there stop short, forgetting the remainder, and go off in a doze again.

After a long interval, Barnaby's breathing grew more deep and regular, and his eyes were closed. But even then the unquiet spirit of the raven interposed. "Polly put the ket—" cried Grip, and his master was broad awake again.

At length Barnaby slept soundly; and the bird, with his bill sunk upon his breast, his breast itself puffed out into a comfortable alderman-like form, and his bright eye growing smaller and smaller, really seemed to be subsiding into a state of repose. Now and then he muttered in a sepulchral voice, "Polly put the ket—" but very drowsily, and more like a drunken man than a reflecting raven.

The widow, scarcely venturing to breathe, rose from her seat. The man glided from the closet, and extinguished the candle.

"—tle on," cried Grip, suddenly struck with an idea, and very much excited. "—tle on. Hurrah! Polly put the ket-tle on, we'll all have tea; Polly put the ket-tle on, we'll all have tea. Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah! I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a ket-tle on, Keep up your spirits, Never say die, Bow, wow, wow, I'm a devil, I'm a ket-tle, I'm a—Polly put the ket-tle on, we'll all have tea."

They stood rooted to the ground, as though it had been a voice from the grave.

But even this failed to awaken the sleeper. He turned over towards the fire, his arm fell to the ground, and his head drooped heavily upon it. The widow and her unwelcome visitor gazed at him and at each other for a moment, and then she motioned him towards the door.

"Stay," he whispered. "You teach your son well."

"I have taught him nothing that you heard to-night. Depart instantly, or I will rouse him."

"You are free to do so. Shall I rouse him?"

"You dare not do that."

"I dare do anything, I have told you. He knows me well, it seems. At least I will know him."

"Would you kill him in his sleep?" cried the widow, throwing herself between them.

"Woman," he returned between his teeth, as he motioned her aside, "I would see him nearer, and I will. If you want one of us to kill the other, wake him."

With that he advanced, and bending down over the prostrate form, softly turned back the head and looked into the face. The light of the fire was upon it, and its every lineament was revealed distinctly. He contemplated it for a brief space, and hastily arose.

"Observe," he whispered in the widow's ear. "In him, of whose existence I was ignorant until to-night, I have you in my power. Be careful how you use me. Be careful how you use me. I am destitute and starving, and a wanderer upon the earth. I may take a sure and slow revenge."

"There is some dreadful meaning in your words. I do not fathom it."

"There is a meaning in them, and I see you fathom it to its very depth. You have anticipated it for years; you have told me as much. I leave you to digest it. Do not forget my warning."

He pointed, as he left her, to the slumbering form, and stealthily withdrawing, made his way into the street. She fell on her knees beside the sleeper, and remained like one stricken into stone, until the tears which fear had frozen so long came tenderly to her relief.

"O Thou," she cried, "who hast taught me such deep love for this one remnant of the promise of a happy life, out of whose affliction even perhaps the comfort springs that he is ever a relying, loving child to me—never growing old or cold at heart, but needing my care and duty in his manly strength as in his cradle-time—help him, in his darkened walk through this sad world, or he is doomed, and my poor heart is broken!"

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**G**LIDING along the silent streets, and holding his course where they were darkest and most gloomy, the man who had left the widow's house crossed London Bridge, and arriving in the City, plunged into the backways, lanes, and courts between Cornhill and Smithfield; with no more fixedness of purpose than to lose himself among their windings, and baffle pursuit, if any one were dogging his steps.

It was the dead time of the night, and all was quiet. Now and then a drowsy watchman's footsteps sounded on the pavement, or the lamp-lighter on his rounds went flashing past, leaving behind a little track of smoke mingled with glowing morsels of his hot red link. He hid himself

even from these partakers of his lonely walk, and shrinking in some arch or doorway while they passed, issued forth again when they were gone, and so pursued his solitary way.

To be shelterless and alone in the open country, hearing the wind moan, and watching for day through the whole long weary night; to listen to the falling rain, and crouch for warmth beneath the lee of some old barn or rick, or in the hollow of a tree; are dismal things—but not so dismal as the wandering up and down where shelter is, and beds and sleepers are by thousands, a houseless rejected creature. To pace the echoing stones from hour to hour, counting the dull chimes of the clocks; to watch the lights twinkling in chamber windows, to think what happy forgetfulness each house shuts in; that here are children coiled together in their beds, here youth, here age, here poverty, here wealth, all equal in their sleep, and all at rest; to have nothing in common with the slumbering world around, not even sleep, Heaven's gift to all its creatures, and be akin to nothing but despair; to feel, by the wretched contrast with everything on every hand, more utterly alone and cast away than in a trackless desert; this is a kind of suffering on which the rivers of great cities close full many a time, and which the solitude in crowds alone awakens.

The miserable man paced up and down the streets—so long, so wearisome, so like each other—and often cast a wistful look towards the east, hoping to see the first faint streaks of day. But obdurate night had yet possession of the sky, and his disturbed and restless walk found no relief.

One house in a back-street was bright with the cheerful glare of lights; there was the sound of music in it, too, and the tread of dancers, and there were cheerful voices, and many a burst of laughter. To this place—to be near something that was awake and glad—he returned again and again; and more than one of those who left it when the merriment was at its height, felt it a check upon their mirthful mood to see him flitting to and fro like an uneasy ghost. At last the guests departed, one and all; and then the house was close shut up, and became as dull and silent as the rest.

His wanderings brought him at one time to the City gaol. Instead of hastening from it as a place of ill omen, and one he had cause to shun, he sat down on some steps hard by, and resting his chin upon his hand, gazed upon its rough and frowning walls as though even they became a refuge in his jaded eyes. He paced it round and round, came back to the same spot, and sat



down again. He did this often, and once, with a hasty movement, crossed to where some men were watching in the prison lodge, and had his foot upon the steps as though determined to accost them. But looking round, he saw that the day began to break, and failing in his purpose, turned and fled.

He was soon in the quarter he had lately traversed, and pacing to and fro again as he had done before. He was passing down a mean street, when from an alley close at hand some shouts of revelry arose, and there came straggling forth a dozen madcaps, whooping and calling to each other, who, parting noisily, took different ways and dispersed in smaller groups.

Hoping that some low place of entertainment which would afford him a safe refuge might be near at hand, he turned into this court when they were all gone, and looked about for a half-opened door, or lighted window, or other indication of the place whence they had come. It was so profoundly dark, however, and so ill-favoured, that he concluded they had but turned up there, missing their way, and were pouring out again when he observed them. With this impression, and finding there was no outlet but that by which he had entered, he was about to turn, when from a grating near his feet a sudden stream of light appeared, and the sound of talking came. He retreated into a doorway to see who these talkers were, and to listen to them.

The light came to the level of the pavement as he did this, and a man ascended, bearing in his hand a torch. This figure unlocked and held open the grating as for the passage of another, who presently appeared, in the form of a young man of small stature and uncommon self-importance, dressed in an obsolete and very gaudy fashion.

"Good night, noble captain," said he with the torch. "Farewell, commander. Good luck, illustrious general!"

In return to these compliments the other bade him hold his tongue, and keep his noise to himself; and laid upon him many similar injunctions with great fluency of speech and sternness of manner.

"Commend me, captain, to the stricken Miggs," returned the torch-bearer in a lower voice. "My captain flies at higher game than Miggses. Ha, ha, ha! My captain is an eagle, both as respects his eye and soaring wings. My captain breaketh hearts as other bachelors break eggs at breakfast."

"What a fool you are, Stagg!" said Mr. Tappertit, stepping on the pavement of the court,

and brushing from his legs the dust he had contracted in his passage upward.

"His precious limbs!" cried Stagg, clasping one of his ankles. "Shall a Miggs aspire to these proportions? No, no, my captain. We will inveigle ladies fair, and wed them in our secret cavern. We will unite ourselves with blooming beauties, captain."

"I'll tell you what, my buck," said Mr. Tappertit, releasing his leg; "I'll trouble you not to take liberties, and not to broach certain questions unless certain questions are broached to you. Speak when you're spoke to on particular subjects, and not otherways. Hold the torch up till I've got to the end of the court, and then kennel yourself, do you hear?"

"I hear you, noble captain."

"Obey, then," said Mr. Tappertit haughtily. "Gentlemen, lead on!" With which word of command (addressed to an imaginary staff or retinue) he folded his arms, and walked with surpassing dignity down the court.

His obsequious follower stood holding the torch above his head, and then the observer saw for the first time, from his place of concealment, that he was blind. Some involuntary motion on his part caught the quick ear of the blind man, before he was conscious of having moved an inch towards him, for he turned suddenly and cried, "Who's there?"

"A man," said the other, advancing. "A friend!"

"A stranger!" rejoined the blind man. "Strangers are not my friends. What do you do there?"

"I saw your company come out, and waited here till they were gone. I want a lodging."

"A lodging at this time!" returned Stagg, pointing towards the dawn as though he saw it.

"Do you know the day is breaking?"

"I know it," rejoined the other, "to my cost. I have been traversing this iron-hearted town all night."

"You had better traverse it again," said the blind man, preparing to descend, "till you find some lodgings suitable to your taste. I don't let any."

"Stay!" cried the other, holding him by the arm.

"I'll beat this light about that hangdog face of yours (for hangdog it is, if it answers to your voice), and rouse the neighbourhood besides, if you detain me," said the blind man. "Let me go. Do you hear?"

"Do you hear?" returned the other, chinking a few shillings together, and hurriedly pressing them into his hand. "I beg nothing of you."

I will pay for the shelter you give me. Death! Is it much to ask of such as you? I have come from the country, and desire to rest where there are none to question me. I am faint, exhausted, worn out, almost dead. Let me lie down, like a dog, before your fire. I ask no more than that. If you would be rid of me, I will depart to-morrow."

"If a gentleman has been unfortunate on the road," muttered Stagg, yielding to the other,

who, pressing on him, had already gained a footing on the steps—"and can pay for his accommodation——"

"I will pay you with all I have. I am just now past the want of food, God knows, and wish but to purchase shelter. What companions have you below?"

"None."

"Then fasten your grate there, and show me the way. Quick!"



"WITH THAT HE ADVANCED, AND BENDING DOWN OVER THE PROSTRATE FORM, SOFTLY TURNED BACK THE HEAD AND LOOKED INTO THE FACE."

The blind man complied after a moment's hesitation, and they descended together. The dialogue had passed as hurriedly as the words could be spoken, and they stood in his wretched room before he had had time to recover from his first surprise.

"May I see where that door leads to, and what is beyond?" said the man, glancing keenly round. "You will not mind that?"

"I will show you myself. Follow me, or go before. Take your choice."

He bade him lead the way, and, by the light of the torch which his conductor held up for the purpose, inspected all three cellars narrowly. Assured that the blind man had spoken truth, and that he lived there alone, the visitor returned with him to the first, in which a fire was burning, and flung himself with a deep groan upon the ground before it.

His host pursued his usual occupation without seeming to heed him any further. But directly he fell asleep—and he noted his falling into a



slumber as readily as the keenest-sighted man could have done—he knelt down beside him, and passed his hand lightly but carefully over his face and person.

His sleep was checkered with starts and moans, and sometimes with a muttered word or two. His hands were clenched, his brow bent, and his mouth firmly set. All this the blind man accurately marked; and as if his curiosity were strongly awakened, and he had already some inkling of his mystery, he sat watching him, if the expression may be used, and listening, until it was broad day.

## CHAPTER XIX.

**D**OLLY VARDEN'S pretty little head was yet bewildered by various recollections of the party, and her bright eyes were yet dazzled by a crowd of images, dancing before them like motes in the sunbeams, among which the effigy of one partner in particular did especially figure, the same being a young coachmaker (a master in his own right), who had given her to understand, when he handed her into the chair at parting, that it was his fixed resolve to neglect his business from that time, and die slowly for the love of her—Dolly's head, and eyes, and thoughts, and seven senses, were all in a state of flutter and confusion for which the party was accountable, although it was now three days old, when, as she was sitting listlessly at breakfast, reading all manner of fortunes (that is to say, of married and flourishing fortunes) in the grounds of her teacup, a step was heard in the workshop, and Mr. Edward Chester was descried through the glass door, standing among the rusty locks and keys, like love among the roses—for which apt comparison the historian may by no means take any credit to himself, the same being the invention, in a sentimental mood, of the chaste and modest Miggs, who, beholding him from the door-steps she was then cleaning, did, in her maiden meditation, give utterance to the simile.

The locksmith, who happened at the moment to have his eyes thrown upward and his head backward in an intense communing with Toby, did not see his visitor, until Mrs. Varden, more watchful than the rest, had desired Sim Tappertit to open the glass door and give him admission—from which untoward circumstance the good lady argued (for she could deduce a precious moral from the most trifling event) that to take

a draught of small ale in the morning was to observe a pernicious, irreligious, and Pagan custom, the relish whereof should be left to swine and Satan, or at least to Popish persons, and should be shunned by the righteous as a work of sin and evil. She would no doubt have pursued her admonition much further, and would have founded on it a long list of precious precepts of inestimable value, but that the young gentleman standing by in a somewhat uncomfortable and discomfited manner while she read her spouse this lecture, occasioned her to bring it to a premature conclusion.

"I'm sure you'll excuse me, sir," said Mrs. Varden, rising and curtsying. "Varden is so very thoughtless, and needs so much reminding— Sim, bring a chair here."

Mr. Tappertit obeyed, with a flourish implying that he did so under protest.

"And you can go, Sim," said the locksmith.

Mr. Tappertit obeyed again, still under protest; and betaking himself to the workshop, began seriously to fear that he might find it necessary to poison his master before his time was out.

In the meantime, Edward returned suitable replies to Mrs. Varden's courtesies, and that lady brightened up very much; so that when he accepted a dish of tea from the fair hands of Dolly, she was perfectly agreeable.

"I am sure if there's anything we can do,— Varden, or I, or Dolly either,—to serve you, sir, at any time, you have only to say it, and it shall be done," said Mrs. V.

"I am much obliged to you, I am sure," returned Edward. "You encourage me to say that I have come here now to beg your good offices."

Mrs. Varden was delighted beyond measure.

"It occurred to me that probably your fair daughter might be going to the Warren either to-day or to-morrow," said Edward, glancing at Dolly; "and if so, and you will allow her to take charge of this letter, ma'am, you will oblige me more than I can tell you. The truth is, that while I am very anxious it should reach its destination, I have particular reasons for not trusting it to any other conveyance; so that, without your help, I am wholly at a loss."

"She was not going that way, sir, either to-day or to-morrow, nor indeed all next week," the lady graciously rejoined, "but we shall be very glad to put ourselves out of the way on your account, and if you wish it, you may depend upon its going to-day. You might suppose," said Mrs. Varden, frowning at her husband, "from Varden's sitting there so glum

and silent, that he objected to this arrangement ; but you must not mind that, sir, if you please. It's his way at home. Out of doors he can be cheerful and talkative enough."

Now, the fact was that the unfortunate locksmith, blessing his stars to find his helpmate in such good-humour, had been sitting with a beaming face, hearing this discourse with a joy past all expression. Wherefore this sudden attack quite took him by surprise.

"My dear Martha——" he said.

"Oh yes, I dare say," interrupted Mrs. Varden with a smile of mingled scorn and pleasantry. "Very dear! We all know that."

"No, but, my good soul," said Gabriel, "you are quite mistaken. You are indeed. I was delighted to find you so kind and ready. I waited, my dear, anxiously, I assure you, to hear what you would say."

"You waited anxiously," repeated Mrs. V. "Yes! Thank you, Varden. You waited, as you always do, that I might bear the blame, if any came of it. But I am used to it," said the lady with a kind of solemn titter, "and that's my comfort."

"I give you my word, Martha——" said Gabriel.

"Let me give you *my* word, my dear," interposed his wife with a Christian smile, "that such discussions as these between married people are much better left alone. Therefore, if you please, Varden, we'll drop the subject. I have no wish to pursue it. I could. I might say a great deal. But I would rather not. Pray don't say any more."

"I don't want to say any more," rejoined the goaded locksmith.

"Well, then, don't," said Mrs. Varden.

"Nor did I begin it, Martha," added the locksmith good-humouredly, "I must say that."

"You did not begin it, Varden!" exclaimed his wife, opening her eyes very wide, and looking round upon the company, as though she would say, You hear this man! "You did not begin it, Varden! But you shall not say I was out of temper. No, you did not begin it, oh dear no, not you, my dear!"

"Well, well," said the locksmith. "That's settled then."

"Oh yes," rejoined his wife, "quite. If you like to say Dolly began it, my dear, I shall not contradict you. I know my duty. I need know it, I am sure. I am often obliged to bear it in mind, when my inclination perhaps would be for the moment to forget it. Thank you, Varden." And so, with a mighty show of humility and forgiveness, she folded her hands,

and looked round again, with a smile which plainly said, "If you desire to see the first and foremost among female martyrs, here she is on view!"

This little incident, illustrative though it was of Mrs. Varden's extraordinary sweetness and amiability, had so strong a tendency to check the conversation and to disconcert all parties but that excellent lady, that only a few monosyllables were uttered until Edward withdrew: which he presently did, thanking the lady of the house a great many times for her condescension, and whispering in Dolly's ear that he would call on the morrow, in case there should happen to be an answer to the note—which, indeed, she knew without his telling, as Barnaby and his friend Grip had dropped in on the previous night to prepare her for the visit which was then terminating.

Gabriel, who had attended Edward to the door, came back with his hands in his pockets; and, after fidgeting about the room in a very uneasy manner, and casting a great many side-long looks at Mrs. Varden (who with the calmest countenance in the world was five fathoms deep in the Protestant Manual), inquired of Dolly how she meant to go. Dolly supposed by the stage-coach, and looked at her lady mother, who, finding herself silently appealed to, dived down at least another fathom into the Manual, and became unconscious of all earthly things.

"Martha——" said the locksmith.

"I hear you, Varden," said his wife, without rising to the surface.

"I am sorry, my dear, you have such an objection to the Maypole and old John, for other-ways as it's a very fine morning, and Saturday's not a busy day with us, we might have all three gone to Chigwell in the chaise, and had quite a happy day of it."

Mrs. Varden immediately closed the Manual, and bursting into tears, requested to be led upstairs.

"What is the matter now, Martha?" inquired the locksmith.

To which Martha rejoined, "Oh! don't speak to me," and protested in agony that if anybody had told her so, she wouldn't have believed it.

"But, Martha," said Gabriel, putting himself in the way as she was moving off with the aid of Dolly's shoulder, "wouldn't have believed what? Tell me what's wrong now. Do tell me. Upon my soul I don't know. Do *you* know, child? Damme!" cried the locksmith, plucking at his wig in a kind of frenzy, "nobody does know, I verily believe, but Miggs!"

"Miggs," said Mrs. Varden faintly, and with



symptoms of approaching incoherence, "is attached to me, and that is sufficient to draw down hatred upon her in this house. She is a comfort to me, whatever she may be to others."

"She's no comfort to me," cried Gabriel, made bold by despair. "She is the misery of my life. She's all the plagues of Egypt in one."

"She's considered so, I have no doubt," said Mrs. Varden. "I was prepared for that; it's natural; it's of a piece with the rest. When you taunt me as you do to my face, how can I wonder that you taunt her behind her back?" And here the incoherence coming on very strong, Mrs. Varden wept, and laughed, and sobbed, and shivered, and hiccoughed, and choked; and said she knew it was very foolish, but she couldn't help it; and that when she was dead and gone, perhaps they would be sorry for it—which really, under the circumstances, did not appear quite so probable as she seemed to think—with a great deal more to the same effect. In a word, she passed with great decency through all the ceremonies incidental to such occasions; and being supported up-stairs, was deposited in a highly spasmodic state on her own bed, where Miss Miggs shortly afterwards flung herself upon the body.

The philosophy of all this was, that Mrs. Varden wanted to go to Chigwell; that she did not want to make any concession or explanation; that she would only go on being implored and entreated so to do; and that she would accept no other terms. Accordingly, after a vast amount of moaning and crying up-stairs, and much damping of foreheads, and vinegaring of temples, and hartshorning of noses, and so forth; and after the most pathetic adjurations from Miggs, assisted by warm brandy-and-water not over-weak, and divers other cordials, also of a stimulating quality, administered at first in tea-spoonsful and afterwards in increasing doses, and of which Miss Miggs herself partook as a preventive measure (for fainting is infectious); after all these remedies, and many more too numerous to mention, but not to take, had been applied; and many verbal consolations, moral, religious, and miscellaneous, had been superadded thereto; the locksmith humbled himself, and the end was gained.

"If it's only for the sake of peace and quietness, father," said Dolly, urging him to go up-stairs.

"Oh, Doll, Doll," said her good-natured father; "if you ever have a husband of your own——"

Dolly glanced at the glass.

"Well, *when* you have," said the locksmith, "never faint, my darling. More domestic unhappiness has come of easy fainting, Doll, than from all the greater passions put together. Remember that, my dear, if you would be really happy, which you never can be if your husband isn't. And a word in your ear, my precious. Never have a Miggs about you!"

With this advice he kissed his blooming daughter on the cheek, and slowly repaired to Mrs. Varden's room; where that lady, lying all pale and languid on her couch, was refreshing herself with a sight of her last new bonnet, which Miggs, as a means of calming her scattered spirits, displayed to the best advantage at her bedside.

"Here's master, mim," said Miggs. "Oh, what a happiness it is when man and wife come round again! Oh gracious, to think that him and her should ever have a word together!" In the energy of these sentiments, which were uttered as an apostrophe to the Heavens in general, Miss Miggs perched the bonnet on the top of her own head, and folding her hands, turned on her tears.

"I can't help it," cried Miggs. "I couldn't, if I was to be drowned in 'em. She has such a forgiving spirit! She'll forget all that has passed, and go along with you, sir. Oh, if it was to the world's end, she'd go along with you."

Mrs. Varden with a faint smile gently reproved her attendant for this enthusiasm, and reminded her, at the same time, that she was far too unwell to venture out that day.

"Oh no, you're not, mim, indeed you're not," said Miggs. "I repeal to master; master knows you're not, mim. The hair, and motion of the shay, will do you good, mim, and you must not give way, you must not raly. She must keep up, mustn't she, sir, for all our sakes? I was a telling her that just now. She must remember us, even if she forgets herself. Master will persuade you, mim, I'm sure. There's Miss Dolly's a-going, you know, and master, and you, and all so happy and so comfortable. Oh!" cried Miggs, turning on the tears again, previous to quitting the room in great emotion, "I never see such a blessed one as she is for the forgiveness of her spirit, I never, never, never did. Nor more did master neither; no, nor no one—never!"

For five minutes, or thereabouts, Mrs. Varden remained mildly opposed to all her husband's prayers that she would oblige him by taking a day's pleasure, but relenting at length, she suffered herself to be persuaded, and granting him

her free forgiveness (the merit whereof, she meekly said, rested with the Manual, and not with her), desired that Miggs might come and help her dress. The handmaid attended promptly, and it is but justice to their joint exertions to record that, when the good lady came down-stairs in course of time, completely decked out for the journey, she really looked as if nothing had happened, and appeared in the very best health imaginable.

As to Dolly, there she was again, the very pink and pattern of good looks, in a smart little cherry-coloured mantle with a hood of the same drawn over her head, and, upon the top of that hood, a little straw hat trimmed with cherry-coloured ribbons, and worn the merest trifle on one side—just enough, in short, to make it the wickedest and most provoking head-dress that ever malicious milliner devised. And not to speak of the manner in which these cherry-coloured decorations brightened her eyes, or vied with her lips, or shed a new bloom on her face, she wore such a cruel little muff, and such a heart-rending pair of shoes, and was so surrounded and hemmed in, as it were, by aggravations of all kinds, that when Mr. Tappertit, holding the horse's head, saw her come out of the house alone, such impulses came over him to decoy her into the chaise and drive off like mad, that he would unquestionably have done it, but for certain uneasy doubts besetting him as to the shortest way to Gretna Green; whether it was up the street or down, or up the right-hand turning or the left; and whether, supposing all the turnpikes to be carried by storm, the blacksmith in the end would marry them on credit; which, by reason of his clerical office, appeared, even to his excited imagination, so unlikely, that he hesitated. And while he stood hesitating, and looking post-chaises-and-six at Dolly, out came his master and his mistress, and the constant Miggs, and the opportunity was gone for ever. For now the chaise creaked upon its springs, and Mrs. Varden was inside; and now it creaked again, and more than ever, and the locksmith was inside; and now it bounded once, as if its heart beat lightly, and Dolly was inside; and now it was gone, and its place was empty, and he and that dreary Miggs were standing in the street together.

The hearty locksmith was in as good a humour as if nothing had occurred for the last twelve months to put him out of his way, Dolly was all smiles and graces, and Mrs. Varden was agreeable beyond all precedent. As they jogged through the streets talking of this thing and of that, who should be desried upon the pavement

but that very coachmaker, looking so genteel that nobody would have believed he had ever had anything to do with a coach but riding in it, and bowing like any nobleman. To be sure Dolly was confused when she bowed again, and to be sure the cherry-coloured ribbons trembled a little when she met his mournful eye, which seemed to say, "I have kept my word, I have begun, the business is going to the devil, and you're the cause of it." There he stood, rooted to the ground: as Dolly said, like a statue; and, as Mrs. Varden said, like a pump: till they turned the corner: and when her father thought it was like his impudence, and her mother wondered what he meant by it, Dolly blushed again till her very hood was pale.

But on they went, not the less merrily for this, and there was the locksmith, in the incautious fulness of his heart, "pulling up" at all manner of places, and evincing a most intimate acquaintance with all the taverns on the road, and all the landlords and all the landladies, with whom, indeed, the little horse was on equally friendly terms, for he kept on stopping of his own accord. Never were people so glad to see other people as these landlords and landladies were to behold Mr. Varden and Mrs. Varden and Miss Varden; and wouldn't they get out, said one; and they really must walk up-stairs, said another; and she would take it ill, and be quite certain they were proud, if they wouldn't have a little taste of something, said a third; and so on, that it really was quite a Progress rather than a ride, and one continued scene of hospitality from beginning to end. It was pleasant enough to be held in such esteem, not to mention the refreshments; so Mrs. Varden said nothing at the time, and was all affability and delight; but such a body of evidence as she collected against the unfortunate locksmith that day, to be used thereafter as occasion might require, never was got together for matrimonial purposes.

In course of time—and in course of a pretty long time too, for these agreeable interruptions delayed them not a little—they arrived upon the skirts of the Forest, and riding pleasantly on among the trees, came at last to the Maypole, where the locksmith's cheerful "Yoho!" speedily brought to the porch old John, and after him young Joe, both of whom were so transfixed at sight of the ladies, that for a moment they were perfectly unable to give them any welcome, and could do nothing but stare.

It was only for a moment, however, that Joe forgot himself, for, speedily reviving, he thrust his drowsy father aside—to Mr. Willet's mighty



and inexpressible indignation—and darting out, stood ready to help them to alight. It was necessary for Dolly to get out first. Joe had her in his arms;—yes, though for a space of time no longer than you could count one in, Joe had her in his arms. Here was a glimpse of happiness!

It would be difficult to describe what a flat and commonplace affair the helping Mrs. Varden out afterwards was, but Joe did it, and did it too with the best grace in the world. Then old John, who, entertaining a dull and foggy sort of idea that Mrs. Varden wasn't fond of him, had been in some doubt whether she might not have come for purposes of assault and battery, took courage, hoped she was well, and offered to conduct her into the house. This tender being amicably received, they marched in together; Joe and Dolly followed arm-in-arm (happiness again!), and Varden brought up the rear.

Old John would have it that they must sit in the bar, and nobody objecting, into the bar they went. All bars are snug places, but the Maypole's was the very snugest, cosiest, and completest bar that ever the wit of man devised. Such amazing bottles in old oaken pigeon-holes; such gleaming tankards dangling from pegs at about the same inclination as thirsty men would hold them to their lips; such sturdy little Dutch kegs ranged in rows on shelves; so many lemons hanging in separate nets, and forming the fragrant grove already mentioned in this chronicle, suggestive, with goodly loaves of snowy sugar stowed away hard by, of punch, idealised beyond all mortal knowledge; such closets, such presses, such drawers full of pipes, such places for putting things away in hollow window-seats, all crammed to the throat with eatables, drinkables, or savoury condiments; lastly, and to crown all, as typical of the immense resources of the establishment, and its defiance to all visitors to cut and come again, such a stupendous cheese!

It is a poor heart that never rejoices—it must have been the poorest, weakest, and most watery heart that ever beat, which would not have warmed towards the Maypole bar. Mrs. Varden's did directly. She could no more have reproached John Willet among those household gods, the kegs and bottles, lemons, pipes, and cheese, than she could have stabbed him with his own bright carving-knife. The order for dinner, too—it might have soothed a savage. "A bit of fish," said John to the cook, "and some lamb chops (breaded, with plenty of ketchup), and a good salad, and a roast spring chicken, with a dish of sausages and mashed potatoes, or some-

thing of that sort." Something of that sort! The resources of these inns! To talk carelessly about dishes, which in themselves were a first-rate holiday kind of dinner, suitable to one's wedding-day, as something of that sort: meaning, if you can't get a spring chicken, any other trifle in the way of poultry will do—such as a peacock, perhaps! The kitchen, too, with its great broad cavernous chimney; the kitchen, where nothing in the way of cookery seemed impossible; where you could believe in anything to eat they chose to tell you of. Mrs. Varden returned from the contemplation of these wonders to the bar again, with a head quite dizzy and bewildered. Her housekeeping capacity was not large enough to comprehend them. She was obliged to go to sleep. Waking was pain in the midst of such immensity.

Dolly in the meanwhile, whose gay heart and head ran upon other matters, passed out at the garden door, and glancing back now and then (but of course not wondering whether Joe saw her), tripped away by a path across the fields with which she was well acquainted, to discharge her mission at the Warren; and this deponent hath been informed, and verily believes, that you might have seen many less pleasant objects than the cherry-coloured mantle and ribbons as they went fluttering along the green meadows in the bright light of the day, like giddy things as they were.

## CHAPTER XX.

**T**HE proud consciousness of her trust, and the great importance she derived from it, might have advertised it to all the house if she had had to run the gauntlet of its inhabitants; but as Dolly had played in every dull room and passage many and many a time when a child, and had ever since been the humble friend of Miss Haredale, whose foster-sister she was, she was as free of the building as the young lady herself. So, using no greater precaution than holding her breath and walking on tiptoe as she passed the library door, she went straight to Emma's room as a privileged visitor.

It was the liveliest room in the building. The chamber was sombre, like the rest for the matter of that, but the presence of youth and beauty would make a prison cheerful (saving, alas! that confinement withers them), and lend some charms of their own to the gloomiest scene. Birds, flowers, books, drawing, music, and a hundred such graceful tokens of feminine loves

and cares, filled it with more of life and human sympathy than the whole house besides seemed made to hold. There was heart in the room; and who that has a heart ever fails to recognise the silent presence of another?

Dolly had one undoubtedly, and it was not a tough one either, though there was a little mist of coquettishness about it, such as sometimes surrounds that sun of life in its morning, and slightly dims its lustre. Thus, when Emma rose to greet her, and, kissing her affectionately on the cheek, told her, in her quiet way, that she had been very unhappy, the tears stood in Dolly's eyes, and she felt more sorry than she could tell; but next moment she happened to raise them to the glass, and really there was something there so exceedingly agreeable, that, as she sighed, she smiled, and felt surprisingly consoled.

"I have heard about it, miss," said Dolly, "and it's very sad indeed, but when things are at the worst they are sure to mend."

"But are you sure they are at the worst?" asked Emma with a smile.

"Why, I don't see how they can very well be more unpromising than they are; I really don't," said Dolly. "And I bring something to begin with."

"Not from Edward?"

Dolly nodded and smiled, and feeling in her pockets (there were pockets in those days) with an affectation of not being able to find what she wanted, which greatly enhanced her importance, at length produced the letter. As Emma hastily broke the seal and became absorbed in its contents, Dolly's eyes, by one of those strange accidents for which there is no accounting, wandered to the glass again. She could not help wondering whether the coachmaker suffered very much, and quite pitied the poor man.

It was a long letter—a very long letter, written close on all four sides of the sheet of paper, and crossed afterwards; but it was not a consolatory letter, for as Emma read it, she stopped from time to time to put her handkerchief to her eyes. To be sure Dolly marvelled greatly to see her in so much distress, for, to her thinking, a love affair ought to be one of the best jokes, and the slickest, merriest kind of thing in life. But she set it down in her own mind that all this came from Miss Haredale's being so constant, and that if she would only take on with some other young gentleman—just in the most innocent way possible, to keep her first lover up to the mark—she would find herself inexpressibly comforted.

"I am sure that's what I should do if it was

me," thought Dolly. "To make one's sweet-hearts miserable is well enough, and quite right, but to be made miserable one's self is a little too much!"

However, it wouldn't do to say so, and therefore she sat looking on in silence. She needed a pretty considerable stretch of patience, for when the long letter had been read once all through it was read again, and when it had been read twice all through it was read again. During this tedious process, Dolly beguiled the time in the most improving manner that occurred to her, by curling her hair on her fingers, with the aid of the looking-glass before mentioned, and giving it some killing twists.

Everything has an end. Even young ladies in love cannot read their letters for ever. In course of time the packet was folded up, and it only remained to write the answer.

But, as this promised to be a work of time likewise, Emma said she would put it off until after dinner, and that Dolly must dine with her. As Dolly had made up her mind to do so beforehand, she required very little pressing; and when they had settled this point, they went to walk in the garden.

They strolled up and down the terrace walks, talking incessantly—at least, Dolly never left off once—and making that quarter of the sad and mournful house quite gay. Not that they talked loudly or laughed much, but they were both so very handsome, and it was such a breezy day, and their light dresses and dark curls appeared so free and joyous in their abandonment, and Emma was so fair, and Dolly so rosy, and Emma so delicately shaped, and Dolly so plump, and—in short, there are no flowers for any garden like such flowers, let horticulturists say what they may, and both house and garden seemed to know it, and to brighten up sensibly.

After this came the dinner and the letter-writing, and some more talking, in the course of which Miss Haredale took occasion to charge upon Dolly certain flirtish and inconstant propensities, which accusations Dolly seemed to think very complimentary indeed, and to be mightily amused with. Finding her quite incorrigible in this respect, Emma suffered her to depart; but not before she had confided to her that important and never-sufficiently-to-be-taken-care-of answer, and endowed her, moreover, with a pretty little bracelet as a keepsake. Having clasped it on her arm, and again advised her, half in jest and half in earnest, to amend her roguish ways, for she knew she was fond of Joe at heart (which Dolly stoutly denied, with a great many haughty protestations that she hoped



she could do better than that, indeed! and so forth), she bade her farewell; and after calling her back to give her more supplementary messages for Edward than anybody with tenfold the gravity of Dolly Varden could be reasonably expected to remember, at length dismissed her.

Dolly bade her good-bye, and tripping lightly down the stairs, arrived at the dreaded library door, and was about to pass it again on tiptoe, when it opened, and behold! there stood Mr. Haredale. Now, Dolly had from her childhood associated with this gentleman the idea of something grim and ghostly, and being at the moment conscience-stricken besides, the sight of him threw her into such a flurry that she could neither acknowledge his presence nor run away, so she gave a great start, and then with downcast eyes stood still and trembled.

"Come here, girl," said Mr. Haredale, taking her by the hand. "I want to speak to you."

"If you please, sir, I'm in a hurry," faltered Dolly, "and—and you have frightened me by coming so suddenly upon me, sir,—I would rather go, sir, if you'll be so good as to let me."

"Immediately," said Mr. Haredale, who had by this time led her into the room and closed the door. "You shall go directly. You have just left Emma?"

"Yes, sir, just this minute.—Father's waiting for me, sir, if you'll please to have the goodness—"

"I know, I know," said Mr. Haredale. "Answer me a question. What did you bring here to-day?"

"Bring here, sir?" faltered Dolly.

"You will tell me the truth, I am sure. Yes."

Dolly hesitated for a little while, and, somewhat emboldened by his manner, said at last, "Well then, sir, it was a letter."

"From Mr. Edward Chester, of course. And you are the bearer of the answer?"

Dolly hesitated again, and not being able to decide upon any other course of action, burst into tears.

"You alarm yourself without cause," said Mr. Haredale. "Why are you so foolish? Surely you can answer me. You know that I have but to put the question to Emma, and learn the truth directly. Have you the answer with you?"

Dolly had what is popularly called a spirit of her own, and, being now fairly at bay, made the best of it.

"Yes, sir," she rejoined, trembling and frightened as she was. "Yes, sir, I have. You may kill me if you please, sir, but I won't give it up. I'm very sorry,—but I won't. There, sir."

"I commend your firmness and your plain

speaking," said Mr. Haredale. "Rest assured that I have as little desire to take your letter as your life. You are a very discreet messenger and a good girl."

Not feeling quite certain, as she afterwards said, whether he might not be "coming over her" with these compliments, Dolly kept as far from him as she could, cried again, and resolved to defend her pocket (for the letter was there) to the last extremity.

"I have some design," said Mr. Haredale after a short silence, during which a smile, as he regarded her, had struggled through the gloom and melancholy—that was natural to his face, "of providing a companion for my niece; for her life is a very lonely one. Would you like the office? You are the oldest friend she has, and the best entitled to it."

"I don't know, sir," answered Dolly, not sure but he was bantering her; "I can't say. I don't know what they might wish at home. I couldn't give an opinion, sir."

"If your friends had no objection, would you have any?" said Mr. Haredale. "Come. There's a plain question, and easy to answer."

"None at all that I know of, sir," replied Dolly. "I should be very glad to be near Miss Emma, of course, and always am."

"That's well," said Mr. Haredale. "That is all I had to say. You are anxious to go. Don't let me detain you."

Dolly didn't let him, nor did she wait for him to try, for the words had no sooner passed his lips than she was out of the room, out of the house, and in the fields again.

The first thing to be done, of course, when she came to herself, and considered what a flurry she had been in, was to cry afresh; and the next thing, when she reflected how well she had got over it, was to laugh heartily. The tears, once banished, gave place to the smiles, and at last Dolly laughed so much that she was fain to lean against a tree, and give vent to her exultation. When she could laugh no longer, and was quite tired, she put her head-dress to rights, dried her eyes, looked back very merrily and triumphantly at the Warren chimneys, which were just visible, and resumed her walk.

The twilight had come on, and it was quickly growing dusk, but the path was so familiar to her from frequent traversing that she hardly thought of this, and certainly felt no uneasiness at being alone. Moreover, there was the bracelet to admire; and when she had given it a good rub, and held it out at arm's length, it sparkled and glittered so beautifully on her wrist, that to look at it in every point of view, and with every

possible turn of the arm, was quite an absorbing business. There was the letter, too, and it looked so mysterious and knowing, when she took it out of her pocket, and it held, as she knew, so much inside, that to turn it over and over, and think about it, and wonder how it

began, and how it ended, and what it said all through, was another matter of constant occupation. Between the bracelet and the letter, there was quite enough to do without thinking of anything else; and admiring each by turns, Dolly went on gaily.



EMMA HAREDALE AND DOLLY VARDEN.

As she passed through a wicket-gate to where the path was narrow, and lay between two hedges garnished here and there with trees, she heard a rustling close at hand, which brought her to a sudden stop. She listened. All was very quiet, and she went on again—not abso-

lutely frightened, but a little quicker than before, perhaps, and possibly not quite so much at her ease, for a check of that kind is startling.

She had no sooner moved on again than she was conscious of the same sound, which was like that of a person tramping stealthily among



bushes and brushwood. Looking towards the spot whence it appeared to come, she almost fancied she could make out a crouching figure. She stopped again. All was quiet as before. On she went once more—decidedly faster now—and tried to sing softly to herself. It must be the wind.

But how came the wind to blow only when she walked, and cease when she stood still? She stopped involuntarily as she made the reflection, and the rustling noise stopped likewise. She was really frightened now, and was yet hesitating what to do, when the bushes crackled and snapped, and a man came plunging through them, close before her.

## CHAPTER XXI.

**I**T was for the moment an inexpressible relief to Dolly to recognise in the person who forced himself into the path so abruptly, and now stood directly in her way, Hugh of the Maypole, whose name she uttered in a tone of delighted surprise that came from her heart.

“Was it you?” she said. “How glad I am to see you! and how could you terrify me so?”

In answer to which he said nothing at all, but stood quite still, looking at her.

“Did you come to meet me?” asked Dolly.

Hugh nodded, and muttered something to the effect that he had been waiting for her, and had expected her sooner.

“I thought it likely they would send,” said Dolly, greatly reassured by this.

“Nobody sent me,” was the sullen answer.

“I came of my own accord.”

The rough bearing of this fellow, and his wild, uncouth appearance, had often filled the girl with a vague apprehension, even when other people were by, and had occasioned her to shrink from him involuntarily. The having him for an unbidden companion in so solitary a place, with the darkness fast gathering about them, renewed and even increased the alarm she had felt at first.

If his manner had been merely dogged and passively fierce, as usual, she would have had no greater dislike to his company than she always felt—perhaps, indeed, would have been rather glad to have had him at hand. But there was something of coarse bold admiration in his look, which terrified her very much. She glanced timidly towards him, uncertain whether to go

forward or retreat, and he stood gazing at her like a handsome satyr; and so they remained for some short time without stirring or breaking silence. At length Dolly took courage, shot past him, and hurried on.

“Why do you spend so much breath in avoiding me?” said Hugh, accommodating his pace to hers, and keeping close at her side.

“I wish to get back as quickly as I can, and you walk too near me,” answered Dolly.

“Too near!” said Hugh, stooping over her so that she could feel his breath upon her forehead. “Why too near? You’re always proud to me, mistress.”

“I am proud to no one. You mistake me,” answered Dolly. “Fall back, if you please, or go on.”

“Nay, mistress,” he rejoined, endeavouring to draw her arm through his. “I’ll walk with you.”

She released herself, and clenching her little hand, struck him with right good will. At this Maypole Hugh burst into a roar of laughter, and passing his arm about her waist, held her in his strong grasp as easily as if she had been a bird.

“Ha, ha, ha! Well done, mistress! Strike again. You shall beat my face, and tear my hair, and pluck my beard up by the roots, and welcome, for the sake of your bright eyes. Strike again, mistress. Do. Ha, ha, ha! I like it.”

“Let me go,” she cried, endeavouring with both her hands to push him off. “Let me go this moment.”

“You had as good be kinder to me, Sweetlips,” said Hugh. “You had, indeed. Come. Tell me now. Why are you always so proud? I don’t quarrel with you for it. I love you when you’re proud. Ha, ha, ha! You can’t hide your beauty from a poor fellow; that’s a comfort!”

She gave him no answer, but, as he had not yet checked her progress, continued to press forward as rapidly as she could. At length, between the hurry she had made, her terror, and the tightness of his embrace, her strength failed her, and she could go no further.

“Hugh,” cried the panting girl, “good Hugh, if you will leave me I will give you anything—everything I have—and never tell one word of this to any living creature.”

“You had best not,” he answered. “Harkye, little dove, you had best not. All about here know me, and what I dare do if I have a mind. If ever you are going to tell, stop when the words are on your lips, and think of the mischief you’ll bring, if you do, upon some innocent heads that you wouldn’t wish to hurt a hair of.

Bring trouble on me, and I'll bring trouble and something more on them in return. I care no more for them than for so many dogs; not so much—why should I? I'd sooner kill a man than a dog any day. I've never been sorry for a man's death in all my life, and I have for a dog's."

There was something so thoroughly savage in the manner of these expressions, and the looks and gestures by which they were accompanied, that her great fear of him gave her new strength, and enabled her by a sudden effort to extricate herself and run fleetly from him. But Hugh was as nimble, strong, and swift of foot as any man in broad England, and it was but a fruitless expenditure of energy, for he had her in his encircling arms again before she had gone a hundred yards.

"Softly, darling—gently. Would you fly from rough Hugh, that loves you as well as any drawing-room gallant?"

"I would," she answered, struggling to free herself again. "I will. Help!"

"A fine for crying out," said Hugh. "Ha, ha, ha! A fine, pretty one, from your lips. I pay myself! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Help! help! help!" As she shrieked with the utmost violence she could exert, a shout was heard in answer, and another, and another.

"Thank Heaven!" cried the girl in an ecstasy. "Joe, dear Joe, this way. Help!"

Her assailant paused, and stood irresolute for a moment, but the shouts drawing nearer and coming quick upon them, forced him to a speedy decision. He released her, whispered with a menacing look, "Tell *him*: and see what follows!" and leaping the hedge, was gone in an instant. Dolly darted off, and fairly ran into Joe Willet's open arms.

"What is the matter? are you hurt? what was it? who was it? where is he? what was he like?" with a great many encouraging expressions and assurances of safety, were the first words Joe poured forth. But poor little Dolly was so breathless and terrified that for some time she was quite unable to answer him, and hung upon his shoulder, sobbing and crying as if her heart would break.

Joe had not the smallest objection to have her hanging on his shoulder; no, not the least, though it crushed the cherry-coloured ribbons sadly, and put the smart little hat out of all shape. But he couldn't bear to see her cry; it went to his very heart. He tried to console her, bent over her, whispered to her—some say kissed her, but that's a fable. At any rate, he said all the kind and tender things he could

think of, and Dolly let him go on and didn't interrupt him once, and it was a good ten minutes before she was able to raise her head and thank him.

"What was it that frightened you?" said Joe.

A man whose person was unknown to her had followed her, she answered; he began by begging, and went on to threats of robbery, which he was on the point of carrying into execution, and would have executed, but for Joe's timely aid. The hesitation and confusion with which she said this, Joe attributed to the fright she had sustained, and no suspicion of the truth occurred to him for a moment.

"Stop when the words are on your lips." A hundred times that night, and very often afterwards, when the disclosure was rising to her tongue, Dolly thought of that, and repressed it. A deeply-rooted dread of the man; the conviction that his ferocious nature, once roused, would stop at nothing; and the strong assurance that if she impeached him, the full measure of his wrath and vengeance would be wreaked on Joe, who had preserved her; these were considerations she had not the courage to overcome, and inducements to secrecy too powerful for her to surmount.

Joe, for his part, was a great deal too happy to inquire very curiously into the matter; and Dolly being yet too tremulous to walk without assistance, they went forward very slowly, and in his mind very pleasantly, until the Maypole lights were near at hand, twinkling their cheerful welcome, when Dolly stopped suddenly, and with a half-scream exclaimed,

"The letter!"

"What letter?" cried Joe.

"That I was carrying—I had it in my hand. My bracelet, too," she said, clasping her wrist. "I have lost them both!"

"Do you mean just now?" said Joe.

"Either I dropped them then, or they were taken from me," answered Dolly, vainly searching her pocket and rustling her dress. "They are gone, both gone. What an unhappy girl I am!" With these words poor Dolly, who, to do her justice, was quite as sorry for the loss of the letter as for her bracelet, fell a crying again, and bemoaned her fate most movingly.

Joe tried to comfort her with the assurance that, directly he had housed her safely in the Maypole, he would return to the spot with a lantern (for it was now quite dark), and make strict search for the missing articles, which there was great probability of his finding, as it was not likely that anybody had passed that way since, and she was not conscious of their having



been forcibly taken from her. Dolly thanked him very heartily for this offer, though with no great hope of his quest being successful; and so, with many lamentations on her side, and many hopeful words on his, and much weakness on the part of Dolly, and much tender supporting on the part of Joe, they reached the Maypole bar at last, where the locksmith and his wife and old John were yet keeping high festival.

Mr. Willet received the intelligence of Dolly's trouble with that surprising presence of mind and readiness of speech for which he was so eminently distinguished above all other men. Mrs. Varden expressed her sympathy for her daughter's distress by scolding her roundly for being so late; and the honest locksmith divided himself between condoling with and kissing Dolly, and shaking hands heartily with Joe, whom he could not sufficiently praise or thank.

In reference to this latter point, old John was far from agreeing with his friend; for, besides that he by no means approved of an adventurous spirit in the abstract, it occurred to him that if his son and heir had been seriously damaged in a scuffle, the consequences would assuredly have been expensive and inconvenient, and might perhaps have proved detrimental to the Maypole business. Wherefore, and because he looked with no favourable eye upon young girls, but rather considered that they and the whole female sex were a kind of nonsensical mistake on the part of Nature, he took occasion to retire and shake his head in private at the boiler; inspired by which silent oracle, he was moved to give Joe various stealthy nudges with his elbow, as a parental reproof and gentle admonition to mind his own business, and not make a fool of himself.

Joe, however, took down the lantern and lighted it; and arming himself with a stout stick, asked whether Hugh was in the stable.

"He's lying asleep before the kitchen fire, sir," said Mr. Willet. "What do you want him for?"

"I want him to come with me to look after this bracelet and letter," answered Joe. "Halloa there! Hugh!"

Dolly turned pale as death, and felt as if she must faint forthwith. After a few moments, Hugh came staggering in, stretching himself and yawning according to custom, and presenting every appearance of having been roused from a sound nap.

"Here, sleepy-head," said Joe, giving him the lantern. "Carry this, and bring the dog, and that small cudgel of yours. And woe betide the fellow if we come upon him."

"What fellow?" growled Hugh, rubbing his eyes and shaking himself.

"What fellow?" returned Joe, who was in a state of great valour and bustle; "a fellow you ought to know of, and be more alive about. It's well for the like of you, lazy giant that you are, to be snoring your time away in chimney-corners, when honest men's daughters can't cross even our quiet meadows at nightfall without being set upon by footpads, and frightened out of their precious lives."

"They never rob me," cried Hugh with a laugh. "I have got nothing to lose. But I'd as lief knock them at head as any other men. How many are there?"

"Only one," said Dolly faintly, for everybody looked at her.

"And what was he like, mistress?" said Hugh with a glance at young Willet, so slight and momentary that the scowl it conveyed was lost on all but her. "About my height?"

"Not—not so tall," Dolly replied, scarce knowing what she said.

"His dress," said Hugh, looking at her keenly, "like—like any of ours now? I know all the people hereabouts, and maybe could give a guess at the man if I had anything to guide me."

Dolly faltered and turned paler yet; then answered that he was wrapped in a loose coat, and had his face hidden by a handkerchief, and that she could give no other description of him.

"You wouldn't know him if you saw him then, belike?" said Hugh with a malicious grin.

"I should not," answered Dolly, bursting into tears again. "I don't wish to see him. I can't bear to think of him. I can't talk about him any more. Don't go to look for these things, Mr. Joe, pray don't. I entreat you not to go with that man."

"Not to go with me!" cried Hugh. "I'm too rough for them all. They're all afraid of me. Why, bless you, mistress, I've the tenderest heart alive. I love all the ladies, ma'am," said Hugh, turning to the locksmith's wife.

Mrs. Varden opined that if he did, he ought to be ashamed of himself; such sentiments being more consistent (so she argued) with a benighted Mussulman or wild Islander than with a staunch Protestant. Arguing from this imperfect state of his morals, Mrs. Varden further opined that he had never studied the Manual. Hugh admitting that he never had, and moreover that he couldn't read, Mrs. Varden declared, with much severity, that he ought to be even more ashamed of himself than before, and strongly recommended him to save up his pocket money for the pur-

chase of one, and further, to teach himself the contents with all convenient diligence. She was still pursuing this train of discourse, when Hugh, somewhat unceremoniously and irreverently, followed his young master out, and left her to edify the rest of the company. This she proceeded to do, and finding that Mr. Willet's eyes were fixed upon her with an appearance of deep attention, gradually addressed the whole of her discourse to him, whom she entertained with a moral and theological lecture of considerable length, in the conviction that great workings were taking place in his spirit. The simple truth was, however, that Mr. Willet, although his eyes were wide open, and he saw a woman before him whose head, by long and steady looking at, seemed to grow bigger and bigger until it filled the whole bar, was to all other intents and purposes fast asleep; and so sat leaning back in his chair, with his hands in his pockets, until his son's return caused him to wake up with a deep sigh, and a faint impression that he had been dreaming about pickled pork and greens—a vision of his slumbers which was no doubt referable to the circumstance of Mrs. Varden's having frequently pronounced the word "Grace" with much emphasis; which word, entering the portals of Mr. Willet's brain as they stood ajar, and coupling itself with the words "before meat," which were there ranging about, did in time suggest a particular kind of meat, together with that description of vegetable which is usually its companion.

The search was wholly unsuccessful. Joe had groped along the path a dozen times, and among the grass, and in the dry ditch, and in the hedge, but all in vain. Dolly, who was quite inconsolable for her loss, wrote a note to Miss Haredale, giving her the same account of it that she had given at the Maypole, which Joe undertook to deliver as soon as the family were stirring next day. That done, they sat down to tea in the bar, where there was an uncommon display of buttered toast, and—in order that they might not grow faint for want of sustenance, and might have a decent halting-place or half-way house between dinner and supper—a few savoury trifles in the shape of great rashers of broiled ham, which, being well cured, done to a turn, and smoking hot, sent forth a tempting and delicious fragrance.

Mrs. Varden was seldom very Protestant at meals, unless it happened that they were underdone or overdone, or indeed that anything occurred to put her out of humour. Her spirits rose considerably on beholding these goodly preparations, and, from the nothingness of good

works, she passed to the somethingness of ham and toast with great cheerfulness. Nay, under the influence of these wholesome stimulants, she sharply reproved her daughter for being low and despondent (which she considered an unacceptable frame of mind), and remarked, as she held her own plate for a fresh supply, that it would be well for Dolly, who pined over the loss of a toy and a sheet of paper, if she would reflect upon the voluntary sacrifices of the missionaries in foreign parts, who lived chiefly on salads.

The proceedings of such a day occasioned various fluctuations in the human thermometer, and especially in instruments so sensitively and delicately constructed as Mrs. Varden. Thus, at dinner Mrs. V. stood at summer heat; genial, smiling, and delightful. After dinner, in the sunshine of the wine, she went up at least half-a-dozen degrees, and was perfectly enchanting. As its effect subsided, she fell rapidly, went to sleep for an hour or so at temperate, and woke at something below freezing. Now she was at summer heat again in the shade; and when tea was over, and old John, producing a bottle of cordial from one of the oaken cases, insisted on her sipping two glasses thereof in slow succession, she stood steadily at ninety for one hour and a quarter. Profiting by experience, the locksmith took advantage of this genial weather to smoke his pipe in the porch, and, in consequence of this prudent management, he was fully prepared, when the glass went down again, to start homewards directly.

The horse was accordingly put in, and the chaise brought round to the door. Joe, who would on no account be dissuaded from escorting them until they had passed the most dreary and solitary part of the road, led out the grey mare at the same time; and, having helped Dolly into her seat (more happiness!), sprung gaily into the saddle. Then, after many good nights, and admonitions to wrap up, and glancing of lights, and handing in of cloaks and shawls, the chaise rolled away, and Joe trotted beside it—on Dolly's side, no doubt, and pretty close to the wheel too.

## CHAPTER XXII.

IT was a fine bright night, and for all her lowliness of spirits Dolly kept looking up at the stars in a manner so bewitching (and *she* knew it!) that Joe was clean out of his senses, and plainly showed that if ever a man were, not to say over head and ears, but over the Monument and the top of St. Paul's in love,



that man was himself. The road was a very good one; not at all a jolting road, or an uneven one; and yet Dolly held the side of the chaise with one little hand all the way. If there had been an executioner behind him with an uplifted axe ready to chop off his head if he touched that hand, Joe couldn't have helped doing it. From putting his own hand upon it as if by chance, and taking it away again after a minute or so, he got to riding along without taking it off at all; as if he, the escort, were bound to do that as an important part of his duty, and had come out for the purpose. The most curious circumstance about this little incident was, that Dolly didn't seem to know of it. She looked so innocent and unconscious when she turned her eyes on Joe, that it was quite provoking.

She talked, though; talked about her fright, and about Joe's coming up to rescue her, and about her gratitude, and about her fear that she might not have thanked him enough, and about their always being friends from that time forth—and about all that sort of thing. And when Joe said, not friends he hoped, Dolly was quite surprised, and said, not enemies she hoped; and when Joe said, couldn't they be something much better than either? Dolly all of a sudden found out a star which was brighter than all the other stars, and begged to call his attention to the same, and was ten thousand times more innocent and unconscious than ever.

In this manner they travelled along, talking very little above a whisper, and wishing the road could be stretched out to some dozen times its natural length—at least that was Joe's desire—when, as they were getting clear of the forest and emerging on the more frequented road, they heard behind them the sound of a horse's feet at a round trot, which, growing rapidly louder as it drew nearer, elicited a scream from Mrs. Varden, and the cry "A friend!" from the rider, who now came panting up, and checked his horse beside them.

"This man again!" cried Dolly, shuddering.

"Hugh!" said Joe. "What errand are you upon?"

"I come to ride back with you," he answered, glancing covertly at the locksmith's daughter. "He sent me."

"My father!" said poor Joe; adding under his breath, with a very unfilial apostrophe, "Will he never think me man enough to take care of myself?"

"Ay!" returned Hugh to the first part of the inquiry. "The roads are not safe just now," he says, "and you'd better have a companion."

BARNABY RUDGE, 7.

"Ride on, then," said Joe. "I'm not going to turn yet."

Hugh complied, and they went on again. It was his whim or humour to ride immediately before the chaise, and from this position he constantly turned his head, and looked back. Dolly felt that he looked at her, but she averted her eyes and feared to raise them once, so great was the dread with which he had inspired her.

This interruption, and the consequent wakefulness of Mrs. Varden, who had been nodding in her sleep up to this point, except for a minute or two at a time, when she roused herself to scold the locksmith for audaciously taking hold of her to prevent her nodding herself out of the chaise, put a restraint upon the whispered conversation, and made it difficult of resumption. Indeed, before they had gone another mile, Gabriel stopped at his wife's desire, and that good lady protested she would not hear of Joe's going a step further on any account whatever. It was in vain for Joe to protest, on the other hand, that he was by no means tired, and would turn back presently, and would see them safely past such and such a point, and so forth. Mrs. Varden was obdurate, and, being so, was not to be overcome by mortal agency.

"Good night—if I must say it," said Joe sorrowfully.

"Good night," said Dolly. She would have added, "Take care of that man, and pray don't trust him," but he had turned his horse's head, and was standing close to them. She had, therefore, nothing for it but to suffer Joe to give her hand a gentle squeeze, and when the chaise had gone on for some distance, to look back and wave it, as he still lingered on the spot where they had parted, with the tall dark figure of Hugh beside him.

What she thought about, going home; and whether the coachmaker held as favourable a place in her meditations as he had occupied in the morning, is unknown. They reached home at last—at last, for it was a long way, made none the shorter by Mrs. Varden's grumbling. Miggs, hearing the sound of wheels, was at the door immediately.

"Here they are, Simmun! Here they are!" cried Miggs, clapping her hands, and issuing forth to help her mistress to alight. "Bring a chair, Simmun. Now, an't you the better for it, mim? Don't you feel more yourself than you would have done if you'd have stopped at home? Oh gracious! how cold you are! Goodness me, sir, she's a perfect heap of ice."

"I can't help it, my good girl. You had better take her in to the fire," said the locksmith.

"Master sounds unfeeling, mim," said Miggs in a tone of commiseration, "but such is not his intentions, I'm sure. After what he has seen of you this day, I never will believe but that he has a deal more affection in his heart than to speak unkind. Come in and sit yourself down by the fire; there's a good dear—do."

Mrs. Varden complied. The locksmith followed with his hands in his pockets, and Mr. Tappertit trundled off with the chaise to a neighbouring stable.

"Martha, my dear," said the locksmith, when they reached the parlour, "if you'll look to Dolly yourself, or let somebody else do it, perhaps it will be only kind and reasonable. She has been frightened you know, and is not at all well to-night."

In fact, Dolly had thrown herself upon the sofa, quite regardless of all the little finery of which she had been so proud in the morning, and, with her face buried in her hands, was crying very much.

At first sight of this phenomenon (for Dolly was by no means accustomed to displays of this sort, rather learning from her mother's example to avoid them as much as possible), Mrs. Varden expressed her belief that never was any woman so beset as she: that her life was a continued scene of trial; that whenever she was disposed to be well and cheerful, so sure were the people around her to throw, by some means or other, a damp upon her spirits; and that, as she had enjoyed herself that day, and Heaven knew it was very seldom she did enjoy herself, so she was now to pay the penalty. To all such propositions Miggs assented freely. Poor Dolly, however, grew none the better for these restoratives, but rather worse, indeed; and seeing that she was really ill, both Mrs. Varden and Miggs were moved to compassion, and tended her in earnest.

But even then their very kindness shaped itself into their usual course of policy, and though Dolly was in a swoon, it was rendered clear to the meanest capacity that Mrs. Varden was the sufferer. Thus when Dolly began to get a little better, and passed into that stage in which matrons hold that remonstrance and argument may be successfully applied, her mother represented to her, with tears in her eyes, that if she had been flurried and worried that day, she must remember it was the common lot of humanity, and in especial of womankind, who through the whole of their existence must expect no less, and were bound to make up their minds to meek endurance and patient resignation. Mrs. Varden entreated her to remember that one of these

days she would, in all probability, have to do violence to her feelings so far as to be married; and that marriage, as she might see every day of her life (and truly she did), was a state requiring great fortitude and forbearance. She represented to her in lively colours, that if she (Mrs. V.) had not, in steering her course through this vale of tears, been supported by a strong principle of duty, which alone upheld and prevented her from drooping, she must have been in her grave many years ago; in which case she desired to know what would have become of that errant spirit (meaning the locksmith), of whose eyes she was the very apple, and in whose path she was, as it were, a shining light and guiding star?

Miss Miggs also put in her word to the same effect. She said that indeed and indeed Miss Dolly might take pattern by her blessed mother, who, she always had said, and always would say, though she were to be hanged, drawn, and quartered for it next minute, was the mildest, amiablest, forgivingest-spirited, long-sufferingest female as ever she could have believed; the mere narration of whose excellencies had worked such a wholesome change in the mind of her own sister-in-law, that, whereas, before, she and her husband lived like cat and dog, and were in the habit of exchanging brass candlesticks, pot-lids, flat-irons, and other such strong resentments, they were now the happiest and affectionatest couple upon earth; as could be proved any day on application at Golden Lion Court, number twenty-sivin, second bell-handle on the right-hand door-post. After glancing at herself as a comparatively worthless vessel, but still as one of some desert, she besought her to bear in mind that her aforesaid dear and only mother was of a weakly constitution and excitable temperament, who had constantly to sustain afflictions in domestic life, compared with which thieves and robbers were as nothing, and yet never sunk down or gave way to despair or wrath, but, in prize-fighting phraseology, always came up to time with a cheerful countenance, and went in to win as if nothing had happened. When Miggs had finished her solo, her mistress struck in again, and the two together performed a duet to the same purpose; the burden being, that Mrs. Varden was persecuted perfection, and Mr. Varden, as the representative of mankind in that apartment, a creature of vicious and brutal habits, utterly insensible to the blessings he enjoyed. Of so refined a character, indeed, was their talent of assault under the mask of sympathy, that when Dolly, recovering, embraced her father tenderly, as if in vindication of his



goodness, Mrs. Varden expressed her solemn hope that this would be a lesson to him for the remainder of his life, and that he would do some little justice to a woman's nature ever afterwards—in which aspiration Miss Miggs, by divers sniffs and coughs, more significant than the longest oration, expressed her entire concurrence.

But the great joy of Miggs's heart was, that she not only picked up a full account of what had happened, but had the exquisite delight of conveying it to Mr. Tappertit for his jealousy and torture. For that gentleman, on account of Dolly's indisposition, had been requested to take his supper in the workshop, and it was conveyed thither by Miss Miggs's own fair hands.

"Oh, Simmun!" said the young lady, "such goings on to-day! Oh, gracious me, Simmun!"

Mr. Tappertit, who was not in the best of humours, and who disliked Miss Miggs more when she laid her hand on her heart and panted for breath than at any other time, as her deficiency of outline was most apparent under such circumstances, eyed her over in his loftiest style, and deigned to express no curiosity whatever.

"I never heard the like, nor nobody else," pursued Miggs. "The idea of interfering with *her*! What people can see in her to make it worth their while to do so, that's the joke—he, he, he!"

Finding there was a lady in the case, Mr. Tappertit haughtily requested his fair friend to be more explicit, and demanded to know what she meant by "her."

"Why, that Dolly," said Miggs, with an extremely sharp emphasis on the name. "But oh, upon my word and honour, young Joseph Willet is a brave one, and he do deserve her, that he do."

"Woman!" said Mr. Tappertit, jumping off the counter on which he was seated; "beware!"

"My stars, Simmun!" cried Miggs in affected astonishment. "You frighten me to death! What's the matter?"

"There are strings," said Mr. Tappertit, flourishing his bread-and-cheese knife in the air, "in the human heart that had better not be vibrated. That's what's the matter."

"Oh, very well—if you're in a huff——" cried Miggs, turning away.

"Huff or no huff," said Mr. Tappertit, detaining her by the wrist. "What do you mean, Jezebel? What were you going to say? Answer me!"

Notwithstanding this uncivil exhortation, Miggs gladly did as she was required; and told him how that their young mistress, being alone in the meadows after dark, had been attacked by three or four tall men, who would have certainly borne her away, and perhaps murdered her, but for the timely arrival of Joseph Willet, who with his own single hand put them all to flight, and rescued her; to the lasting admiration of his fellow-creatures generally, and to the eternal love and gratitude of Dolly Varden.

"Very good," said Mr. Tappertit, fetching a long breath when the tale was told, and rubbing his hair up till it stood stiff and straight on end all over his head. "His days are numbered."

"Oh, Simmun!"

"I tell you," said the 'prentice, "his days are numbered. Leave me. Get along with you."

Miggs departed at his bidding, but less because of his bidding than because she desired to chuckle in secret. When she had given vent to her satisfaction, she returned to the parlour; where the locksmith, stimulated by quietness and Toby, had become talkative, and was disposed to take a cheerful review of the occurrences of the day. But Mrs. Varden, whose practical religion (as is not uncommon) was usually of the retrospective order, cut him short by declaiming on the sinfulness of such junketings, and holding that it was high time to go to bed. To bed, therefore, she withdrew, with an aspect as grim and gloomy as that of the Maypole's own state couch; and to bed the rest of the establishment soon afterwards repaired.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

**T**HWILIGHT had given place to night some hours, and it was high noon in those quarters of the town in which "the world" condescended to dwell—the world being then, as now, of very limited dimensions and easily lodged—when Mr. Chester reclined upon a sofa in his dressing-room in the Temple, entertaining himself with a book.

He was dressing, as it seemed, by easy stages, and having performed half the journey, was taking a long rest. Completely attired, as to his legs and feet, in the trimmest fashion of the day, he had yet the remainder of his toilet to perform. The coat was stretched, like a refined scarecrow, on its separate horse; the waistcoat was displayed to the best advantage; the various orna-

mental articles of dress were severally set out in most alluring order; and yet he lay dangling his legs between the sofa and the ground, as intent upon his book as if there were nothing but bed before him.

"Upon my honour," he said, at length raising

his eyes to the ceiling with the air of a man who was reflecting seriously on what he had read; "upon my honour, the most masterly composition, the most delicate thoughts, the finest code of morality, and the most gentlemanly sentiments in the universe! Ah, Ned, Ned, if you



"HUFF OR NO HUFF," SAID MR. TAPPERTIT, DETAINING HER BY THE WRIST. "WHAT DO YOU MEAN, JEZEBEL? WHAT WERE YOU GOING TO SAY? ANSWER ME!"

would but form your mind by such precepts, we should have but one common feeling on every subject that could possibly arise between us!"

This apostrophe was addressed, like the rest of his remarks, to empty air: for Edward was not present, and the father was quite alone.

"My Lord Chesterfield," he said, pressing his hand tenderly upon the book as he laid it down, "if I could but have profited by your genius soon enough to have formed my son on the model you have left to all wise fathers, both he and I would have been rich men. Shakspeare



was undoubtedly very fine in his way; Milton good, though prosy; Lord Bacon deep, and decidedly knowing; but the writer who should be his country's pride is my Lord Chesterfield."

He became thoughtful again, and the tooth-pick was in requisition.

"I thought I was tolerably accomplished as a man of the world," he continued. "I flattered myself that I was pretty well versed in all those little arts and graces which distinguish men of the world from boors and peasants, and separate their character from those intensely vulgar sentiments which are called the national character. Apart from any natural prepossession in my own favour, I believed I was. Still, in every page of this enlightened writer, I find some captivating hypocrisy which has never occurred to me before, or some superlative piece of selfishness to which I was utterly a stranger. I should quite blush for myself before this stupendous creature, if, remembering his precepts, one might blush at anything. An amazing man! a nobleman indeed! Any King or Queen may make a Lord, but only the Devil himself—and the Graces—can make a Chesterfield."

Men who are thoroughly false and hollow seldom try to hide those vices from themselves; and yet, in the very act of avowing them, they lay claim to the virtues they feign most to despise. "For," say they, "this is honesty, this is truth. All mankind are like us, but they have not the candour to avow it." The more they affect to deny the existence of any sincerity in the world, the more they would be thought to possess it in its boldest shape; and this is an unconscious compliment to Truth on the part of these philosophers, which will turn the laugh against them to the Day of Judgment.

Mr. Chester, having extolled his favourite author as above recited, took up the book again in the excess of his admiration, and was composing himself for a further perusal of its sublime morality, when he was disturbed by a noise at the outer door; occasioned, as it seemed, by the endeavours of his servant to obstruct the entrance of some unwelcome visitor.

"A late hour for an importunate creditor," he said, raising his eyebrows with as indolent an expression of wonder as if the noise were in the street, and one with which he had not the smallest personal concern. "Much after their accustomed time. The usual pretence I suppose. No doubt a heavy payment to make up to-morrow. Poor fellow, he loses time, and time is money, as the good proverb says—I never found it out, though. Well, what now? You know I am not at home."

"A man, sir," replied the servant, who was to the full as cool and negligent in his way as his master, "has brought home the riding whip you lost the other day. I told him you were out, but he said he was to wait while I brought it in, and wouldn't go till I did."

"He was quite right," returned his master, "and you're a blockhead, possessing no judgment or discretion whatever. Tell him to come in, and see that he rubs his shoes for exactly five minutes first."

The man laid the whip on a chair, and withdrew. The master, who had only heard his foot upon the ground, and had not taken the trouble to turn round and look at him, shut his book, and pursued the train of ideas his entrance had disturbed.

"If time were money," he said, handling his snuff-box, "I would compound with my creditors, and give them—let me see—how much a day? There's my nap after dinner—an hour—they're extremely welcome to that, and to make the most of it. In the morning, between my breakfast and the paper, I could spare them another hour; in the evening, before dinner, say another. Three hours a day. They might pay themselves in calls, with interest, in twelve months. I think I shall propose it to them. Ah, my centaur, are you there?"

"Here I am," replied Hugh, striding in, followed by a dog as rough and sullen as himself; "and trouble enough I've had to get here. What do you ask me to come for, and keep me out when I *do* come?"

"My good fellow," returned the other, raising his head a little from the cushion, and carelessly surveying him from top to toe, "I am delighted to see you, and to have, in your being here, the very best proof that you are not kept out. How are you?"

"I'm well enough," said Hugh impatiently.

"You look a perfect marvel of health. Sit down."

"I'd rather stand," said Hugh.

"Please yourself, my good fellow," returned Mr. Chester, rising, slowly pulling off the loose robe he wore, and sitting down before the dressing-glass. "Please yourself by all means."

Having said this in the politest and blandest tone possible, he went on dressing, and took no further notice of his guest, who stood in the same spot, as uncertain what to do next, eyeing him sulkily from time to time.

"Are you going to speak to me, master?" he said after a long silence.

"My worthy creature," returned Mr. Chester, "you are a little ruffled and out of humour. I'll

wait till you're quite yourself again. I am in no hurry."

This behaviour had its intended effect. It humbled and abashed the man, and made him still more irresolute and uncertain. Hard words he could have returned, violence he would have repaid with interest; but this cool, complacent, contemptuous, self-possessed reception caused him to feel his inferiority more completely than the most elaborate arguments. Everything contributed to this effect. His own rough speech, contrasted with the soft persuasive accents of the other; his rude bearing, and Mr. Chester's polished manner; the disorder and negligence of his ragged dress, and the elegant attire he saw before him: with all the unaccustomed luxuries and comforts of the room, and the silence that gave him leisure to observe these things, and feel how ill at ease they made him; all these influences, which have too often some effect on tutored minds, and become of almost resistless power when brought to bear on such a mind as his, quelled Hugh completely. He moved by little and little nearer to Mr. Chester's chair, and glancing over his shoulder at the reflection of his face in the glass, as if seeking for some encouragement in its expression, said at length, with a rough attempt at conciliation,

"Are you going to speak to me, master, or am I to go away?"

"Speak you," said Mr. Chester, "speak you, good fellow. I have spoken, have I not? I am waiting for you."

"Why, lookee, sir," returned Hugh with increased embarrassment, "am I the man that you privately left your whip with before you rode away from the Maypole, and told to bring it back whenever he might want to see you on a certain subject?"

"No doubt the same, or you have a twin brother," said Mr. Chester, glancing at the reflection of his anxious face; "which is not probable, I should say."

"Then I have come, sir," said Hugh, "and I have brought it back, and something else along with it. A letter, sir, it is, that I took from the person who had charge of it." As he spoke, he laid upon the dressing-table Dolly's lost epistle. The very letter that had cost her so much trouble.

"Did you obtain this by force, my good fellow?" said Mr. Chester, casting his eye upon it without the least perceptible surprise or pleasure.

"Not quite," said Hugh. "Partly."

"Who was the messenger from whom you took it?"

"A woman. One Varden's daughter."

"Oh indeed!" said Mr. Chester gaily. "What else did you take from her?"

"What else?"

"Yes," said the other in a drawing manner, for he was fixing a very small patch of sticking-plaster on a very small pimple near the corner of his mouth. "What else?"

"Well—a kiss," replied Hugh after some hesitation.

"And what else?"

"Nothing."

"I think," said Mr. Chester in the same easy tone, and smiling twice or thrice to try if the patch adhered—"I think there was something else. I have heard a trifle of jewellery spoken of—a mere trifle—a thing of such little value, indeed, that you may have forgotten it. Do you remember anything of the kind—such as a bracelet now, for instance?"

Hugh with a muttered oath thrust his hand into his breast, and drawing the bracelet forth, wrapped in a scrap of hay, was about to lay it on the table likewise, when his patron stopped his hand and bade him put it up again.

"You took that for yourself, my excellent friend," he said, "and may keep it. I am neither a thief, nor a receiver. Don't show it to me. You had better hide it again, and lose no time. Don't let me see where you put it either," he added, turning away his head.

"You're not a receiver!" said Hugh bluntly, despite the increasing awe in which he held him. "What do you call *that*, master?" striking the letter with his heavy hand.

"I call that quite another thing," said Mr. Chester coolly. "I shall prove it presently, as you will see. You are thirsty, I suppose?"

Hugh drew his sleeve across his lips, and gruffly answered yes.

"Step to that closet, and bring me a bottle you will see there, and a glass."

He obeyed. His patron followed him with his eyes, and when his back was turned, smiled as he had never done when he stood beside the mirror. On his return, he filled the glass and bade him drink. That dram dispatched, he poured him out another, and another.

"How many can you bear?" he said, filling the glass again.

"As many as you like to give me. Pour on. Fill high. A bumper with a bead in the middle! Give me enough of this," he added, as he tossed it down his hairy throat, "and I'll do murder if you ask me!"

"As I don't mean to ask you, and you might possibly do it without being invited if you went



on much further," said Mr. Chester with great composure, "we will stop, if agreeable to you, my good friend, at the next glass.—You were drinking before you came here."

"I always am when I can get it," cried Hugh boisterously, waving the empty glass above his head, and throwing himself into a rude dancing attitude. "I always am. Why not? Ha, ha, ha! What's so good to me as this? What ever has been? What else has kept away the cold on bitter nights, and driven hunger off in starving times? What else has given me the strength and courage of a man, when men would have left me to die, a puny child? I should never have had a man's heart but for this. I should have died in a ditch. Where's he who, when I was a weak and sickly wretch, with trembling legs and fading sight, bade me cheer up as this did? I never knew him; not I. I drink to the drink, master. Ha, ha, ha!"

"You are an exceedingly cheerful young man," said Mr. Chester, putting on his cravat with great deliberation, and slightly moving his head from side to side to settle his chin in its proper place. "Quite a boon companion."

"Do you see this hand, master," said Hugh, "and this arm?" baring the brawny limb to the elbow. "It was once mere skin and bone, and would have been dust in some poor churchyard by this time, but for the drink."

"You may cover it," said Mr. Chester; "it's sufficiently real in your sleeve."

"I should never have been spirited up to take a kiss from the proud little beauty, master, but for the drink," cried Hugh. "Ha, ha, ha! It was a good one. As sweet as honeysuckle, I warrant you. I thank the drink for it. I'll drink to the drink again, master. Fill me one more. Come. One more!"

"You are such a promising fellow," said his patron, putting on his waistcoat with great nicety, and taking no heed of this request, "that I must caution you against having too many impulses from the drink, and getting hung before your time. What's your age?"

"I don't know."

"At any rate," said Mr. Chester, "you are young enough to escape what I may call a natural death for some years to come. How can you trust yourself in my hands, on so short an acquaintance, with a halter round your neck? What a confiding nature yours must be!"

Hugh fell back a pace or two, and surveyed him with a look of mingled terror, indignation, and surprise. Regarding himself in the glass with the same complacency as before, and speaking as smoothly as if he were discussing some

pleasant chit-chat of the town, his patron went on:

"Robbery on the king's highway, my young friend, is a very dangerous and ticklish occupation. It is pleasant, I have no doubt, while it lasts; but, like many other pleasures in this transitory world, it seldom lasts long. And really if, in the ingenuousness of youth, you open your heart so readily on the subject, I am afraid your career will be an extremely short one."

"How's this?" said Hugh. "What do you talk of, master? Who was it set me on?"

"Who?" said Mr. Chester, wheeling sharply round, and looking full at him for the first time. "I didn't hear you. Who was it?"

Hugh faltered, and muttered something which was not audible.

"Who was it? I am curious to know," said Mr. Chester with surpassing affability. "Some rustic beauty, perhaps? But be cautious, my good friend. They are not always to be trusted. Do take my advice now, and be careful of yourself." With these words he turned to the glass again, and went on with his toilet.

Hugh would have answered him that he, the questioner himself, had set him on, but the words stuck in his throat. The consummate art with which his patron had led him to this point, and managed the whole conversation, perfectly baffled him. He did not doubt that if he had made the retort which was on his lips when Mr. Chester turned round and questioned him so keenly, he would straightway have given him into custody, and had him dragged before a justice with the stolen property upon him; in which case it was as certain he would have been hung as it was that he had been born. The ascendancy which it was the purpose of the man of the world to establish over this savage instrument was gained from that time. Hugh's submission was complete. He dreaded him beyond description; and felt that accident and artifice had spun a web about him which, at a touch from such a master hand as his, would bind him to the gallows.

With these thoughts passing through his mind, and yet wondering at the very same time how he who came there rioting in the confidence of this man (as he thought), should be so soon and so thoroughly subdued, Hugh stood cowering before him, regarding him uneasily from time to time, while he finished dressing. When he had done so, he took up the letter, broke the seal, and throwing himself back in his chair, read it leisurely through.

"Very neatly worded, upon my life! Quite a woman's letter, full of what people call tender-

ness, and disinterestedness, and heart, and all that sort of thing."

As he spoke, he twisted it up, and glancing lazily round at Hugh as though he would say, "You see this?" held it in the flame of the candle. When it was in a full blaze, he tossed it into the grate, and there it smouldered away.

"It was directed to my son," he said, turning to Hugh, "and you did quite right to bring it here. I opened it on my own responsibility, and you see what I have done with it. Take this for your trouble."

Hugh stepped forward to receive the piece of money he held out to him. As he put it in his hand he added:

"If you should happen to find anything else of this sort, or to pick up any kind of information you may think I would like to have, bring it here, will you, my good fellow?"

This was said with a smile which implied—or Hugh thought it did—"Fail to do so at your peril!" He answered that he would.

"And don't," said his patron with an air of the very kindest patronage, "don't be at all downcast or uneasy respecting that little rashness we have been speaking of. Your neck is as safe in my hands, my good fellow, as though a baby's fingers clasped it, I assure you.—Take another glass. You are quieter now."

Hugh accepted it from his hand, and looking stealthily at his smiling face, drank the contents in silence.

"Don't you—ha, ha!—don't you drink to the drink any more?" said Mr. Chester in his most winning manner.

"To you, sir," was the sullen answer, with something approaching a bow. "I drink to you."

"Thank you. God bless you. By-the-bye, what is your name, my good soul? You are called Hugh, I know, of course. Your other name?"

"I have no other name."

"A very strange fellow! Do you mean that you never knew one, or that you don't choose to tell it? Which?"

"I'd tell it if I could," said Hugh quickly. "I can't. I have been always called Hugh; nothing more. I never knew, nor saw, nor thought about a father; and I was a boy of six—that's not very old—when they hung my mother up at Tyburn for a couple of thousand men to stare at. They might have let her live. She was poor enough."

"How very sad!" exclaimed his patron with a condescending smile. "I have no doubt she was an exceedingly fine woman."

"You see that dog of mine?" said Hugh abruptly.

"Faithful, I dare say?" rejoined his patron, looking at him through his glass; "and immensely clever? Virtuous and gifted animals, whether man or beast, always are so very hideous."

"Such a dog as that, and one of the same breed, was the only living thing except me that howled that day," said Hugh. "Out of the two thousand odd—there was a larger crowd for its being a woman—the dog and I alone had any pity. If he'd have been a man, he'd have been glad to be quit of her, for she had been forced to keep him lean and half starved; but being a dog, and not having a man's sense, he was sorry."

"It was dull of the brute, certainly," said Mr. Chester, "and very like a brute."

Hugh made no rejoinder, but whistling to his dog, who sprung up at the sound, and came jumping and sporting about him, bade his sympathising friend good night.

"Good night," he returned. "Remember; you're safe with me—quite safe. So long as you deserve it, my good fellow, as I hope you always will, you have a friend in me, on whose silence you may rely. Now do be careful of yourself, pray do, and consider what jeopardy you might have stood in. Good night. Bless you!"

Hugh truckled before the hidden meaning of these words as much as such a being could, and crept out of the door so submissively and subserviently—with an air, in short, so different from that with which he had entered—that his patron, on being left alone, smiled more than ever.

"And yet," he said as he took a pinch of snuff, "I do not like their having hanged his mother. The fellow has a fine eye, and I am sure she was handsome. But very probably she was coarse—red-nosed perhaps, and had clumsy feet. Ay, it was all for the best, no doubt."

With this comforting reflection, he put on his coat, took a farewell glance at the glass, and summoned his man, who promptly attended, followed by a chair and its two bearers.

"Foh!" said Mr. Chester. "The very atmosphere that centaur has breathed seems tainted with the cart and ladder. Here, Peak. Bring some scent and sprinkle the floor; and take away the chair he sat upon, and air it; and dash a little of that mixture upon me. I am stifled!"

The man obeyed; and the room and its master being both purified, nothing remained for Mr. Chester but to demand his hat, to fold it jauntily under his arm, to take his seat in the chair, and be carried off; humming a fashionable tune.



## CHAPTER XXIV.

HOW the accomplished gentleman spent the evening in the midst of a dazzling and brilliant circle; how he enchanted all those with whom he mingled by the grace of his deportment, the politeness of his manner, the vivacity of his conversation, and the sweetness of his voice; how it was observed in every corner, that Chester was a man of that happy disposition that nothing ruffled him, that he was one on whom the world's cares and errors sat lightly as his dress, and in whose smiling face a calm and tranquil mind was constantly reflected; how honest men, who by instinct knew him better, bowed down before him nevertheless, deferred to his every word, and courted his favourable notice; how people, who really had good in them, went with the stream, and fawned and flattered, and approved, and despised themselves while they did so, and yet had not the courage to resist; how, in short, he was one of those who are received and cherished in society (as the phrase is) by scores who individually would shrink from and be repelled by the object of their lavish regard; are things of course, which will suggest themselves. Matter so commonplace needs but a passing glance, and there an end.

The despisers of mankind—apart from the mere fools and mimics, of that creed—are of two sorts. They who believe their merit neglected and unappreciated make up one class; they who receive adulation and flattery, knowing their own worthlessness, compose the other. Be sure that the coldest-hearted misanthropes are ever of this last order.

Mr. Chester sat up in bed next morning, sipping his coffee, and remembering with a kind of contemptuous satisfaction how he had shone last night, and how he had been caressed and courted, when his servant brought in a very small scrap of dirty paper, tightly sealed in two places, on the inside whereof was inscribed, in pretty large text, these words: "A friend. Desiring of a conference. Immediate. Private. Burn it when you've read it."

"Where in the name of the Gunpowder Plot did you pick up this?" said his master.

It was given him by a person then waiting at the door, the man replied.

"With a cloak and dagger?" said Mr. Chester.

With nothing more threatening about him, it appeared, than a leather apron and a dirty face. "Let him come in." In he came—

Mr. Tappetit; with his hair still on end, and a great lock in his hand, which he put down on the floor in the middle of the chamber, as if he were about to go through some performances in which it was a necessary agent.

"Sir," said Mr. Tappetit with a low bow, "I thank you for this condescension, and am glad to see you. Pardon the menial office in which I am engaged, sir, and extend your sympathies to one who, humble as his appearance is, has inn'ard workings far above his station."

Mr. Chester held the bed-curtain farther back, and looked at him with a vague impression that he was some maniac, who had not only broken open the door of his place of confinement, but had brought away the lock. Mr. Tappetit bowed again, and displayed his legs to the best advantage.

"You have heard, sir," said Mr. Tappetit, laying his hand upon his breast, "of G. Varden Locksmith and Bell-hanger and repairs neatly executed in town and country, Clerkenwell, London?"

"What then?" asked Mr. Chester.

"I am his 'prentice, sir."

"What *then*?"

"Ahem!" said Mr. Tappetit. "Would you permit me to shut the door, sir, and will you further, sir, give me your honour bright that what passes between us is in the strictest confidence?"

Mr. Chester laid himself calmly down in bed again, and turning a perfectly undisturbed face towards the strange apparition, which had by this time closed the door, begged him to speak out, and to be as rational as he could, without putting himself to any very great personal inconvenience.

"In the first place, sir," said Mr. Tappetit, producing a small pocket-handkerchief, and shaking it out of the folds, "as I have not a card about me (for the envy of masters debases us below that level), allow me to offer the best substitute that circumstances will admit of. If you will take that in your own hand, sir, and cast your eye on the right-hand corner," said Mr. Tappetit, offering it with a graceful air, "you will meet with my credentials."

"Thank you," answered Mr. Chester, politely accepting, and turning to some blood-red characters at one end. "'Four. Simon Tappetit. One.' Is that the——"

"Without the numbers, sir, that is my name," replied the 'prentice. "They are merely intended as directions to the washerwoman, and have no connection with myself or family. *Your* name, sir," said Mr. Tappetit, looking

very hard at his nightcap, "is Chester, I suppose? You needn't pull it off, sir, thank you. I observe E. C. from here. We will take the rest for granted."

"Pray, Mr. Tappertit," said Mr. Chester, "has that complicated piece of ironmongery which you have done me the favour to bring with you, any immediate connection with the business we are to discuss?"

"It has not, sir," rejoined the 'prentice. "It's going to be fitted on a ware'us door in Thames Street."

"Perhaps, as that is the case," said Mr. Chester, "and as it has a stronger flavour of oil than I usually refresh my bedroom with, you will oblige me so far as to put it outside the door?"

"By all means, sir," said Mr. Tappertit, suiting the action to the word.

"You'll excuse my mentioning it, I hope?"

"Don't apologise, sir, I beg. And now, if you please, to business."

During the whole of this dialogue Mr. Chester had suffered nothing but his smile of unvarying serenity and politeness to appear upon his face. Sim Tappertit, who had far too good an opinion of himself to suspect that anybody could be playing upon him, thought within himself that this was something like the respect to which he was entitled, and drew a comparison, from this courteous demcanour of a stranger, by no means favourable to the worthy locksmith.

"From what passes in our house," said Mr. Tappertit, "I am aware, sir, that your son keeps company with a young lady against your inclinations. Sir, your son has not used me well."

"Mr. Tappertit," said the other, "you grieve me beyond description."

"Thank you, sir," replied the 'prentice. "I'm glad to hear you say so. He's very proud, sir, is your son; very haughty."

"I am afraid he *is* haughty," said Mr. Chester. "Do you know, I was really afraid of that before; and you confirm me."

"To recount the menial offices I've had to do for your son, sir," said Mr. Tappertit; "the chairs I've had to hand him, the coaches I've had to call for him, the numerous degrading duties, wholly unconnected with my indenters, that I've had to do for him, would fill a family Bible. Besides which, sir, he is but a young man himself, and I do not consider 'Thankee, Sim,' a proper form of address on those occasions."

"Mr. Tappertit, your wisdom is beyond your years. Pray go on."

"I thank you for your good opinion, sir," said Sim, much gratified, "and will endeavour so to do. Now, sir, on this account (and perhaps for another reason or two which I needn't go into), I am on your side. And what I tell you is this—that as long as our people go backwards and forwards, to and fro, up and down, to that there jolly old Maypole, lettering, and messaging, and fetching and carrying, you couldn't help your son keeping company with that young lady by deputy,—not if he was minded night and day by all the Horse Guards, and every man of 'em in the very fullest uniform."

Mr. Tappertit stopped to take breath after this, and then started fresh again.

"Now, sir, I am a-coming to the point. You will inquire of me, 'How is this to be prevented?' I'll tell you how. If an honest, civil, smiling gentleman like you——"

"Mr. Tappertit—really——"

"No, no, I'm serious," rejoined the 'prentice; "I am, upon my soul. If an honest, civil, smiling gentleman like you was to talk but ten minutes to our old woman—that's Mrs. Varden—and flatter her up a bit, you'd gain her over for ever. Then there's this point got—that her daughter Dolly"—here a flush came over Mr. Tappertit's face—"wouldn't be allowed to be a go-between from that time forward; and till that point's got, there's nothing ever will prevent her. Mind that."

"Mr. Tappertit, your knowledge of human nature——"

"Wait a minute," said Sim, folding his arms with a dreadful calmness. "Now I come to THE point. Sir, there is a villain at that Maypole, a monster in human shape, a vagabond of the deepest dye, that unless you get rid of, and have kidnapped and carried off at the very least—nothing less will do—will marry your son to that young woman, as certainly and surely as if he was the Archbishop of Canterbury himself. He will, sir, for the hatred and malice that he bears to you; let alone the pleasure of doing a bad action, which to him is its own reward. If you knew how this chap, this Joseph Willet—that's his name—comes backwards and forwards to our house, libelling, and denouncing, and threatening you, and how I shudder when I hear him, you'd hate him worse than I do,—worse than I do, sir," said Mr. Tappertit wildly, putting his hair up straighter, and making a crunching noise with his teeth; "if sich a thing is possible."

"A little private vengeance in this, Mr. Tappertit?"

"Private vengeance, sir, or public sentiment,



or both combined—destroy him,” said Mr. Tappertit. “Miggs says so too. Miggs and me both say so. We can’t bear the plotting and undermining that takes place. Our souls recoil from it. Barnaby Rudge and Mrs. Rudge are in it likewise; but the villain, Joseph Willet, is the ringleader. Their plottings and schemes are known to me and Miggs. If you want information of ’em, apply to us. Put Joseph Willet down, sir. Destroy him. Crush him. And be happy.”

With these words, Mr. Tappertit, who seemed to expect no reply, and to hold it as a necessary consequence of his eloquence that his hearer should be utterly stunned, dumb-founded, and overwhelmed, folded his arms so that the palm of each hand rested on the opposite shoulder, and disappeared after the manner of those mysterious warners of whom he had read in cheap story-books.

“That fellow,” said Mr. Chester, relaxing his face when he was fairly gone, “is good practice. I *have* some command of my features, beyond all doubt. He fully confirms what I suspected, though; and blunt tools are sometimes found of use, where sharper instruments would fail. I fear I may be obliged to make great havoc among these worthy people. A troublesome necessity! I quite feel for them.”

With that he fell into a quiet slumber:—subsidied into such a gentle, pleasant sleep, that it was quite infantine.

## CHAPTER XXV.

**L**EAVING the favoured, and well-received, and flattered of the world; him of the world most worldly, who never compromised himself by an ungentlemanly action, and never was guilty of a manly one; to lie smilingly asleep—for even sleep, working but little change in his dissembling face, became with him a piece of cold, conventional hypocrisy—we follow in the steps of two slow travellers on foot, making towards Chigwell. Barnaby and his mother. Grip in their company, of course.

The widow, to whom each painful mile seemed longer than the last, toiled wearily along; while Barnaby, yielding to every inconstant impulse, fluttered here and there, now leaving her far behind, now lingering far behind himself, now darting into some by-lane or path and leaving her to pursue her way alone, until

he stealthily emerged again and came upon her with a wild shout of merriment, as his wayward and capricious nature prompted. Now he would call to her from the topmost branch of some high tree by the roadside; now, using his tall staff as a leaping-pole, come flying over ditch or hedge or five-barred gate; now run with surprising swiftness for a mile or more on the straight road, and halting, sport upon a patch of grass with Grip till she came up. These were his delights; and when his patient mother heard his merry voice, or looked into his flushed and healthy face, she would not have abated them by one sad word or murmur, though each had been to her a source of suffering in the same degree as it was to him of pleasure.

It is something to look upon enjoyment, so that it be free and wild and in the face of nature, though it is but the enjoyment of an idiot. It is something to know that Heaven has left the capacity of gladness in such a creature’s breast; it is something to be assured that, however lightly men may crush that faculty in their fellows, the Great Creator of mankind imparts it even to his despised and slighted work. Who would not rather see a poor idiot happy in the sun-light than a wise man pining in a darkened gaol?

Ye men of gloom and austerity, who paint the face of Infinite Benevolence with an eternal frown, read in the Everlasting Book, wide open to your view, the lesson it would teach. Its pictures are not in black and sombre hues, but bright and glowing tints; its music—save when ye drown it—is not in sighs and groans, but songs and cheerful sounds. Listen to the million voices in the summer air, and find one dismal as your own. Remember, if ye can, the sense of hope and pleasure which every glad return of day awakens in the breast of all your kind who have not changed their nature; and learn some wisdom even from the witless, when their hearts are lifted up, they know not why, by the mirth and happiness it brings.

The widow’s breast was full of care, was laden heavily with secret dread and sorrow; but her boy’s gaiety of heart gladdened her, and beguiled the long journey. Sometimes he would bid her lean upon his arm, and would keep beside her steadily for a short distance; but it was more his nature to be rambling to and fro, and she better liked to see him free and happy, even than to have him near her, because she loved him better than herself.

She had quitted the place to which they were travelling directly after the event which had changed her whole existence; and for two-and-

twenty years had never had courage to revisit it. It was her native village. How many recollections crowded on her mind when it appeared in sight!

Two-and-twenty years. Her boy's whole life and history. The last time she looked back

upon those roofs among the trees, she carried him in her arms, an infant. How often since that time had she sat beside him night and day, watching for the dawn of mind that never came; how had she feared, and doubted, and yet hoped, long after conviction forced itself upon



“NOW HE WOULD CALL TO HER FROM THE TOPMOST BRANCH OF SOME HIGH TREE BY THE ROADSIDE.”

her! The little stratagems she had devised to try him, the little tokens he had given in his childish way—not of dulness, but of something infinitely worse, so ghastly and unchildlike in its cunning—came back as vividly as if but yesterday had intervened. The room in which they used to be; the spot in which his cradle stood;

he old and elfin-like in face, but ever dear to her, gazing at her with a wild and vacant eye, and crooning some uncouth song as she sat by and rocked him; every circumstance of his infancy came thronging back, and the most trivial, perhaps, the most distinctly.

His older childhood, too; the strange imagin-



ings he had; his terror of certain senseless things—familiar objects he endowed with life; the slow and gradual breaking out of that one horror in which, before his birth, his darkened intellect began; how, in the midst of all, she had found some hope and comfort in his being unlike another child, and had gone on almost believing in the slow development of his mind until he grew a man, and then his childhood was complete and lasting; one after another, all these old thoughts sprung up within her, strong after their long slumber, and bitterer than ever.

She took his arm, and they hurried through the village street. It was the same as it was wont to be in old times, yet different too, and wore another air. The change was in herself, not it; but she never thought of that, and wondered at its alteration, and where it lay, and what it was.

The people all knew Barnaby, and the children of the place came flocking round him—as she remembered to have done with their fathers and mothers, round some silly beggarman, when a child herself. None of them knew her; they passed each well-remembered house, and yard, and homestead; and striking into the fields, were soon alone again.

The Warren was the end of their journey. Mr. Haredale was walking in the garden, and seeing them as they passed the iron gate, unlocked it, and bade them enter that way.

“At length you have mustered heart to visit the old place,” he said to the widow. “I am glad you have.”

“For the first time, and the last, sir,” she replied.

“The first for many years, but not the last?”

“The very last.”

“You mean,” said Mr. Haredale, regarding her with some surprise, “that having made this effort, you are resolved not to persevere, and are determined to relapse? This is unworthy of you. I have often told you, you should return here. You would be happier here than elsewhere, I know. As to Barnaby, it’s quite his home.”

“And Grip’s,” said Barnaby, holding the basket open. The raven hopped gravely out, and perching on his shoulder and addressing himself to Mr. Haredale, cried—as a hint, perhaps, that some temperate refreshment would be acceptable—“Polly put the ket-tle on, we’ll all have tea!”

“Hear me, Mary,” said Mr. Haredale kindly, as he motioned her to walk with him towards the house. “Your life has been an example of patience and fortitude, except in this one

particular, which has often given me great pain. It is enough to know that you were cruelly involved in the calamity which deprived me of an only brother, and Emma of her father, without being obliged to suppose (as I sometimes am) that you associate us with the author of our joint misfortunes.”

“Associate *you* with him, sir!” she cried.

“Indeed,” said Mr. Haredale, “I think you do. I almost believe that because your husband was bound by so many ties to our relation, and died in his service and defence, you have come in some sort to connect us with his murder.”

“Alas!” she answered. “You little know my heart, sir. You little know the truth!”

“It is natural you should do so; it is very probable you may, without being conscious of it,” said Mr. Haredale, speaking more to himself than her. “We are a fallen house. Money, dispensed with the most lavish hand, would be a poor recompense for sufferings like yours; and thinly scattered by hands so pinched and tied as ours, it becomes a miserable mockery. I feel it so, God knows,” he added hastily. “Why should I wonder if she does?”

“You do me wrong, dear sir, indeed,” she rejoined with great earnestness; “and yet, when you come to hear what I desire your leave to say—”

“I shall find my doubts confirmed?” he said, observing that she faltered and became confused. “Well?”

He quickened his pace for a few steps, but fell back again to her side, and said:

“And have you come all this way at last, solely to speak to me?”

She answered, “Yes.”

“A curse,” he muttered, “upon the wretched state of us proud beggars, from whom the poor and rich are equally at a distance; the one being forced to treat us with a show of cold respect; the other condescending to us in their every deed and word, and keeping more aloof the nearer they approach us!—Why, if it were pain to you (as it must have been) to break for this slight purpose the chain of habit forged through two-and-twenty years, could you not let me know your wish, and beg me to come to you?”

“There was not time, sir,” she rejoined. “I took my resolution but last night, and taking it, felt that I must not lose a day—a day! an hour—in having speech with you.”

They had by this time reached the house. Mr. Haredale paused for a moment, and looked at her as if surprised by the energy of her manner. Observing, however, that she took no

heed of him, but glanced up, shuddering, at the old walls with which such horrors were connected in her mind, he led her by a private stair into his library, where Emma was seated in a window, reading.

The young lady, seeing who approached, hastily rose and laid aside her book, and with many kind words, and not without tears, gave her a warm and earnest welcome. But the widow shrunk from her embrace as though she feared her, and sunk down trembling on a chair.

"It is the return to this place after so long an absence," said Emma gently. "Pray ring, dear uncle—or stay—Barnaby will run himself and ask for wine——"

"Not for the world," she cried. "It would have another taste—I could not touch it. I want but a minute's rest. Nothing but that."

Miss Haredale stood beside her chair, regarding her with silent pity. She remained for a little time quite still; then rose and turned to Mr. Haredale, who had sat down in his easy-chair, and was contemplating her with fixed attention.

The tale connected with the mansion borne in mind, it seemed, as has been already said, the chosen theatre for such a deed as it had known. The room in which this group were now assembled—hard by the very chamber where the act was done—dull, dark, and sombre; heavy with worm-eaten books; deadened and shut in by faded hangings, muffling every sound; shadowed mournfully by trees whose rustling boughs gave ever and anon a spectral knocking at the glass; wore, beyond all others in the house, a ghostly gloomy air. Nor were the group assembled there unfitting tenants of the spot. The widow, with her marked and startling face and down-cast eyes; Mr. Haredale, stern and despondent ever; his niece beside him, like, yet most unlike, the picture of her father, which gazed reproachfully down upon them from the blackened wall; Barnaby, with his vacant look and restless eye; were all in keeping with the place, and actors in the legend. Nay, the very raven, who had hopped upon the table, and with the air of some old necromancer appeared to be profoundly studying a great folio volume that lay open on a desk, was strictly in unison with the rest, and looked like the embodied spirit of evil biding his time of mischief.

"I scarcely know," said the widow, breaking silence, "how to begin. You will think my mind disordered."

"The whole tenor of your quiet and reproachless life since you were last here," returned Mr.

Haredale mildly, "shall bear witness for you. Why do you fear to awaken such a suspicion? You do not speak to strangers. You have not to claim our interest or consideration for the first time. Be more yourself. Take heart. Any advice or assistance that I can give you, you know is yours of right, and freely yours."

"What if I came, sir," she rejoined, "I who have but one other friend on earth, to reject your aid from this moment, and to say that henceforth I launch myself upon the world alone and unassisted, to sink or swim as Heaven may decree?"

"You would have, if you came to me for such a purpose," said Mr. Haredale calmly, "some reason to assign for conduct so extraordinary, which—if one may entertain the possibility of anything so wild and strange—would have its weight, of course."

"That, sir," she answered, "is the misery of my distress. I can give no reason whatever. My own bare word is all that I can offer. It is my duty, my imperative and bounden duty. If I did not discharge it, I should be a base and guilty wretch. Having said that, my lips are sealed, and I can say no more."

As though she felt relieved at having said so much, and had nerved herself to the remainder of her task, she spoke from this time with a firmer voice and heightened courage.

"Heaven is my witness, as my own heart is—and yours, dear young lady, will speak for me, I know—that I have lived, since that time we all have bitter reason to remember, in unchanging devotion and gratitude to this family. Heaven is my witness that, go where I may, I shall preserve those feelings unimpaired. And it is my witness, too, that they alone impel me to the course I must take, and from which nothing now shall turn me, as I hope for mercy."

"These are strange riddles," said Mr. Haredale.

"In this world, sir," she replied, "they may, perhaps, never be explained. In another, the Truth will be discovered in its own good time. And may that time," she added in a low voice, "be far distant!"

"Let me be sure," said Mr. Haredale, "that I understand you, for I am doubtful of my own senses. Do you mean that you are resolved voluntarily to deprive yourself of those means of support you have received from us so long—that you are determined to resign the annuity we settled on you twenty years ago—to leave house, and home, and goods, and begin life anew—and this for some secret reason or monstrous



fancy which is incapable of explanation, which only now exists, and has been dormant all this time? In the name of God, under what delusion are you labouring?"

"As I am deeply thankful," she made answer, "for the kindness of those, alive and dead, who have owned this house; and as I would not have its roof fall down and crush me, or its very walls drip blood, my name being spoken in their hearing; I never will again subsist upon their bounty, or let it help me to subsistence. You do not know," she added suddenly, "to what uses it may be applied; into what hands it may pass. I do, and I renounce it."

"Surely," said Mr. Haredale, "its uses rest with you."

"They did. They rest with me no longer. It may be—it *is*—devoted to purposes that mock the dead in their graves. It never can prosper with me. It will bring some other heavy judgment on the head of my dear son, whose innocence will suffer for his mother's guilt."

"What words are these?" cried Mr. Haredale, regarding her with wonder. "Among what associates have you fallen? Into what guilt have you ever been betrayed?"

"I am guilty, and yet innocent; wrong, yet right; good in intention, though constrained to shield and aid the bad. Ask me no more questions, sir; but believe that I am rather to be pitied than condemned. I must leave my house to-morrow, for while I stay there, it is haunted. My future dwelling, if I am to live in peace, must be a secret. If my poor boy should ever stray this way, do not tempt him to disclose it, or have him watched when he returns; for if we are hunted, we must fly again. And now this load is off my mind, I beseech you—and you, dear Miss Haredale, too—to trust me if you can, and think of me kindly as you have been used to do. If I die, and cannot tell my secret even then (for that may come to pass), it will sit the lighter on my breast in that hour for this day's work; and on that day, and every day until it comes, I will pray for and thank you both, and trouble you no more."

With that she would have left them, but they detained her, and with many soothing words and kind entreaties besought her to consider what she did, and above all to repose more freely upon them, and say what weighed so sorely on her mind. Finding her deaf to their persuasions, Mr. Haredale suggested, as a last resource, that she should confide in Emma, of whom, as a young person, and one of her own sex, she might stand in less dread than of him-

self. From this proposal, however, she recoiled with the same indescribable repugnance she had manifested when they met. The utmost that could be wrung from her was a promise that she would receive Mr. Haredale at her own house next evening, and in the meantime reconsider her determination and their dissuasions—though any change on her part, as she told them, was quite hopeless. This condition made at last, they reluctantly suffered her to depart, since she would neither eat nor drink within the house; and she, and Barnaby, and Grip accordingly went out as they had come, by the private stair and garden-gate; seeing and being seen of no one by the way.

It was remarkable in the raven that during the whole interview he had kept his eye on his book with exactly the air of a very sly human rascal, who, under the mask of pretending to read hard, was listening to everything. He still appeared to have the conversation very strongly in his mind, for although, when they were alone again, he issued orders for the instant preparation of innumerable kettles for purposes of tea, he was thoughtful, and rather seemed to do so from an abstract sense of duty than with any regard to making himself agreeable, or being what is commonly called good company.

They were to return by the coach. As there was an interval of full two hours before it started, and they needed rest and some refreshment, Barnaby begged hard for a visit to the Maypole. But his mother, who had no wish to be recognised by any of those who had known her long ago, and who feared, besides, that Mr. Haredale might, on second thoughts, dispatch some messenger to that place of entertainment in quest of her, proposed to wait in the churchyard instead. As it was easy for Barnaby to buy and carry thither such humble viands as they required, he cheerfully assented, and in the churchyard they sat down to take their frugal dinner.

Here, again, the raven was in a highly reflective state; walking up and down, when he had dined, with an air of elderly complacency which was strongly suggestive of his having his hands under his coat-tails; and appearing to read the tombstones with a very critical taste. Sometimes, after a long inspection of an epitaph, he would strop his beak upon the grave to which it referred, and cry in his hoarse tones, "I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil!" but whether he addressed his observations to any supposed person below, or merely threw them off as a general remark, is matter of uncertainty.

It was a quiet pretty spot, but a sad one for Barnaby's mother; for Mr. Reuben Haredale

lay there, and near the vault in which his ashes rested was a stone to the memory of her own husband, with a brief inscription recording how and when he had lost his life. She sat here, thoughtful and apart, until their time was out, and the distant horn told that the coach was coming.

Barnaby, who had been sleeping on the grass, sprung up quickly at the sound; and Grip, who appeared to understand it equally well, walked

into his basket straightway, entreating society in general (as though he intended a kind of satire upon them in connection with churchyards) never to say die on any terms. They were soon on the coach-top and rolling along the road.

It went round by the Maypole, and stopped at the door. Joe was from home, and Hugh came sluggishly out to hand up the parcel that it called for. There was no fear of old John coming out. They could see him from the



"SHE SAT HERE, THOUGHTFUL AND APART, UNTIL THEIR TIME WAS OUT."

coach roof fast asleep in his cosy bar. It was a part of John's character. He made a point of going to sleep at the coach's time. He despised gadding about; he looked upon coaches as things that ought to be indicted; as disturbers of the peace of mankind; as restless, bustling, busy, horn-blowing contrivances, quite beneath the dignity of men, and only suited to giddy girls that did nothing but chatter and go a shopping. "We know nothing about coaches here, sir," John would say, if any unlucky

stranger made inquiry touching the offensive vehicles; "we don't book for 'em; we'd rather not; they're more trouble than they're worth, with their noise and rattle. If you like to wait for 'em you can; but we don't know anything about 'em; they may call, and they may not—there's a carrier—he was looked upon as quite good enough for us when *I* was a boy."

She dropped her veil as Hugh climbed up, and while he hung behind and talked to Barnaby in whispers. But neither he nor any other



person spoke to her, or noticed her, or had any curiosity about her; and so, an alien, she visited and left the village where she had been born, and had lived a merry child, a comely girl, a happy wife—where she had known all her enjoyment of life, and had entered on its hardest sorrows.

CHAPTER XXVI.

**A**ND you're not surprised to hear this, Varden?" said Mr. Haredale. "Well! You and she have always been the best friends, and you should understand her, if anybody does."

"I ask your pardon, sir," rejoined the locksmith. "I didn't say I understood her. I wouldn't have the presumption to say that of any woman. It's not so easily done. But I am not so much surprised, sir, as you expected me to be, certainly."

"May I ask you not, my good friend?"

"I have seen, sir," returned the locksmith with evident reluctance, "I have seen, in connection with her, something that has filled me with distrust and uneasiness. She has made bad friends—how, or when, I don't know; but that her house is a refuge for one robber and cut-throat, at least, I am certain. There, sir! Now it's out."

"Varden!"

"My own eyes, sir, are my witnesses, and for her sake I would be willingly half blind, if I could but have the pleasure of mistrusting 'em. I have kept the secret till now, and it will go no further than yourself, I know; but I tell you that with my own eyes—broad awake—I saw, in the passage of her house one evening after dark, the highwayman who robbed and wounded Mr. Edward Chester, and on the same night threatened me."

"And you made no effort to detain him?" said Mr. Haredale quickly.

"Sir," returned the locksmith, "she herself prevented me—held me with all her strength, and hung about me until he had got clear off." And, having gone so far, he related circumstantially all that had passed upon the night in question.

This dialogue was held in a low tone in the locksmith's little parlour, into which honest Gabriel had shown his visitor on his arrival. Mr. Haredale had called upon him to entreat his company to the widow's, that he might have the assistance of his persuasion and influence; and

out of this circumstance the conversation had arisen.

"I forbore," said Gabriel, "from repeating one word of this to anybody, as it could do her no good, and might do her great harm. I thought and hoped, to say the truth, that she would come to me, and talk to me about it, and tell me how it was; but though I have purposely put myself in her way more than once or twice, she has never touched upon the subject—except by a look. And indeed," said the good-natured locksmith, "there was a good deal in the look, more than could have been put into a great many words. It said, among other matters, 'Don't ask me anything,' so imploringly, that I didn't ask her anything. You'll think me an old fool I know, sir. If it's any relief to call me one, pray do."

"I am greatly disturbed by what you tell me," said Mr. Haredale after a silence. "What meaning do you attach to it?"

The locksmith shook his head, and looked doubtfully out of window at the failing light.

"She cannot have married again," said Mr. Haredale.

"Not without our knowledge surely, sir."

"She may have done so, in the fear that it would lead, if known, to some objection or estrangement. Suppose she married incautiously—it is not improbable, for her existence has been a lonely and monotonous one for many years—and the man turned out a ruffian, she would be anxious to screen him, and yet would revolt from his crimes. This might be. It bears strongly on the whole drift of her discourse yesterday, and would quite explain her conduct. Do you suppose Barnaby is privy to these circumstances?"

"Quite impossible to say, sir," returned the locksmith, shaking his head again: "and next to impossible to find out from him. If what you suppose is really the case, I tremble for the lad—a notable person, sir, to put to bad uses—"

"It is not possible, Varden," said Mr. Haredale in a still lower tone of voice than he had spoken yet, "that we have been blinded and deceived by this woman from the beginning? It is not possible that this connection was formed in her husband's lifetime, and led to his and my brother's—"

"Good God, sir," cried Gabriel, interrupting him, "don't entertain such dark thoughts for a moment. Five-and-twenty years ago, where was there a girl like her? A gay, handsome, laughing, bright-eyed damsel! Think what she was, sir. It makes my heart ache now, even

now, though I'm an old man, with a woman for a daughter, to think what she was and what she is. We all change, but that's with Time; Time does his work honestly, and I don't mind him. A fig for Time, sir. Use him well, and he's a hearty fellow, and scorns to have you at a disadvantage. But care and suffering (and those have changed her) are devils, sir—secret, stealthy, undermining devils—who tread down the brightest flowers in Eden, and do more havoc in a month than Time does in a year. Picture to yourself for one minute what Mary was before they went to work with her fresh heart and face—do her that justice—and say whether such a thing is possible."

"You're a good fellow, Varden," said Mr. Haredale, "and are quite right. I have brooded on that subject so long, that every breath of suspicion carries me back to it. You are quite right."

"It isn't, sir," cried the locksmith with brightened eyes, and sturdy, honest voice; "it isn't because I courted her before Rudge, and failed, that I say she was too good for him. She would have been as much too good for me. But she *was* too good for him; he wasn't free and frank enough for her. I don't reproach his memory with it, poor fellow; I only want to put her before you as she really was. For myself, I'll keep her old picture in my mind; and thinking of that, and what has altered her, I'll stand her friend, and try to win her back to peace. And damme, sir," cried Gabriel, "with your pardon for the word, 'I'd do the same if she had married fifty highwaymen in a twelve-month; and think it in the Protestant Manual too, though Martha said it wasn't, tooth and nail, till doomsday!'"

If the dark little parlour had been filled with a dense fog, which, clearing away in an instant, left it all radiance and brightness, it could not have been more suddenly cheered than by this outbreak on the part of the hearty locksmith. In a voice nearly as full and round as his own, Mr. Haredale cried "Well said!" and bade him come away without more parley. The locksmith complied right willingly; and both getting into a hackney coach which was waiting at the door, drove off straightway.

They alighted at the street corner, and, dismissing their conveyance, walked to the house. To their first knock at the door there was no response. A second met with the like result. But in answer to the third, which was of a more vigorous kind, the parlour window-sash was gently raised, and a musical voice cried:

"Haredale, my dear fellow, I am extremely

glad to see you. How very much you have improved in your appearance since our last meeting! I never saw you looking better. *How* do you do?"

Mr. Haredale turned his eyes towards the casement whence the voice proceeded, though there was no need to do so, to recognise the speaker, and Mr. Chester waved his hand, and smiled a courteous welcome.

"The door will be opened immediately," he said. "There is nobody but a very dilapidated female to perform such offices. You will excuse her infirmities? If she were in a more elevated station of society, she would be gouty. Being but a hewer of wood and drawer of water, she is rheumatic. My dear Haredale, these are natural class distinctions, depend upon it."

Mr. Haredale, whose face resumed its lowering and distrustful look the moment he heard the voice, inclined his head stiffly, and turned his back upon the speaker.

"Not opened yet!" said Mr. Chester. "Dear me! I hope the aged soul has not caught her foot in some unlucky cobweb by the way. She is there at last! Come in, I beg!"

Mr. Haredale entered, followed by the locksmith. Turning with a look of great astonishment to the old woman who had opened the door, he inquired for Mrs. Rudge—for Barnaby. They were both gone, she replied, wagging her ancient head, for good. There was a gentleman in the parlour, who perhaps could tell them more. That was all *she* knew.

"Pray, sir," said Mr. Haredale, presenting himself before this new tenant, "where is the person whom I came here to see?"

"My dear friend," he returned, "I have not the least idea."

"Your trifling is ill timed," retorted the other in a suppressed tone and voice, "and its subject ill chosen. Reserve it for those who are your friends, and do not expend it on me. I lay no claim to the distinction, and have the self-denial to reject it."

"My dear, good sir," said Mr. Chester, "you are heated with walking. Sit down, I beg. Our friend is——"

"Is but a plain honest man," returned Mr. Haredale, "and quite unworthy of your notice."

"Gabriel Varden by name, sir," said the locksmith bluntly.

"A worthy English yeoman!" said Mr. Chester. "A most worthy yeoman, of whom I have frequently heard my son Ned—darling fellow—speak, and have often wished to see. Varden, my good friend, I am glad to know you. You wonder now," he said, turning languidly to Mr.



Haredale, "to see me here. Now I am sure you do."

Mr. Haredale glanced at him—not fondly or admiringly—smiled, and held his peace.

"The mystery is solved in a moment," said Mr. Chester, "in a moment. Will you step aside with me one instant? You remember our little compact in reference to Ned and your dear niece, Haredale? You remember the list of assistants in their innocent intrigue? You remember these two people being among them? My dear fellow, congratulate yourself and me. I have bought them off."

"You have done what?" said Mr. Haredale.

"Bought them off," returned his smiling friend. "I have found it necessary to take some active steps towards setting this boy-and-girl attachment quite at rest, and have begun by removing these two agents. You are surprised? Who *can* withstand the influence of a little money? They wanted it, and have been bought off. We have nothing more to fear from them. They are gone."

"Gone!" echoed Mr. Haredale. "Where?"

"My dear fellow—and you must permit me to say again that you never looked so young; so positively boyish as you do to-night—the Lord knows where; I believe Columbus himself wouldn't find them. Between you and me, they have their hidden reasons, but upon that point I have pledged myself to secrecy. She appointed to see you here to-night I know, but found it inconvenient, and couldn't wait. Here is the key of the door. I am afraid you'll find it inconveniently large; but as the tenement is yours, your good-nature will excuse that, Haredale, I am certain."

## CHAPTER XXVII.

**M**R. HAREDALE stood in the widow's parlour with the door-key in his hand, gazing by turns at Mr. Chester and at Gabriel Varden, and occasionally glancing downward at the key, as in the hope that of its own accord it would unlock the mystery: until Mr. Chester, putting on his hat and gloves, and sweetly inquiring whether they were walking in the same direction, recalled him to himself.

"No," he said. "Our roads diverge—widely, as you know. For the present I shall remain here."

"You will be hipped, Haredale; you will be miserable, melancholy, utterly wretched," re-

turned the other. "It's a place of the very last description for a man of your temper. I know it will make you very miserable."

"Let it," said Mr. Haredale, sitting down; "and thrive upon the thought. Good night!"

Feigning to be wholly unconscious of the abrupt wave of the hand which rendered this farewell tantamount to a dismissal, Mr. Chester retorted with a bland and heartfelt benediction, and inquired of Gabriel in what direction *he* was going.

"Yours, sir, would be too much honour for the like of me," replied the locksmith, hesitating.

"I wish you to remain here a little while, Varden," said Mr. Haredale, without looking towards them. "I have a word or two to say to you."

"I will not intrude upon your conference another moment," said Mr. Chester with inconceivable politeness. "May it be satisfactory to you both! God bless you!" So saying, and bestowing upon the locksmith a most refulgent smile, he left them.

"A deplorably constituted creature, that rugged person," he said as he walked along the street; "he is an atrocity that carries its own punishment along with it—a bear that gnaws himself. And here is one of the inestimable advantages of having a perfect command over one's inclinations. I have been tempted, in these two short interviews, to draw upon that fellow fifty times. Five men in six would have yielded to the impulse. By suppressing mine, I wound him deeper and more keenly than if I were the best swordsman in all Europe, and he the worst. You are the wise man's very last resource," he said, tapping the hilt of his weapon; "we can but appeal to you when all else is said and done. To come to you before, and thereby spare our adversaries so much, is a barbarian mode of warfare, quite unworthy any man with the remotest pretensions to delicacy of feeling or refinement."

He smiled so very pleasantly as he communed with himself after this manner, that a beggar was emboldened to follow him for alms, and to dog his footsteps for some distance. He was gratified by the circumstance, feeling it complimentary to his power of feature, and as a reward suffered the man to follow him until he called a chair, when he graciously dismissed him with a fervent blessing.

"Which is as easy as cursing," he wisely added as he took his seat, "and more becoming to the face.—To Clerkenwell, my good creatures, if you please!" The chairmen were rendered quite vivacious by having such a courteous bur-

den, and to Clerkenwell they went at a fair round trot.

Alighting at a certain point he had indicated to them upon the road, and paying them something less than he had expected from a fare of such gentle speech, he turned into the street in which the locksmith dwelt, and presently stood beneath the shadow of the Golden Key. Mr. Tappertit, who was hard at work by lamp-light in a corner of the workshop, remained unconscious of his presence until a hand upon his shoulder made him start and turn his head.

"Industry," said Mr. Chester, "is the soul of business, and the keystone of prosperity. Mr. Tappertit, I shall expect you to invite me to dinner when you are Lord Mayor of London."

"Sir," returned the 'prentice, laying down his hammer, and rubbing his nose on the back of a very sooty hand, "I scorn the Lord Mayor and everything that belongs to him. We must have another state of society, sir, before you catch me being Lord Mayor. How de do, sir?"

"The better, Mr. Tappertit, for looking into your ingenuous face once more. I hope you are well."

"I am as well, sir," said Sim, standing up to get nearer to his ear, and whispering hoarsely, "as any man can be under the aggrawations to which I am exposed. My life's a burden to me. If it wasn't for vengeance, I'd play at pitch and toss with it on the losing hazard."

"Is Mrs. Varden at home?" said Mr. Chester.

"Sir," returned Sim, eyeing him over with a look of concentrated expression, "she is. Did you wish to see her?"

Mr. Chester nodded.

"Then come this way, sir," said Sim, wiping his face upon his apron. "Follow me, sir.—Would you permit me to whisper in your ear one half a second?"

"By all means."

Mr. Tappertit raised himself on tiptoe, applied his lips to Mr. Chester's ear, drew back his head without saying anything, looked hard at him, applied them to his ear again, again drew back, and finally whispered—"The name is Joseph Willet. Hush! I say no more."

Having said that much, he beckoned the visitor with a mysterious aspect to follow him to the parlour door, where he announced him in the voice of a gentleman usher—"Mr. Chester."

"And not Mr. Ed'dard, mind," said Sim, looking into the door again, and adding this by way of postscript in his own person: "it's his father."

"But do not let his father," said Mr. Chester, advancing hat in hand, as he observed the effect

of this last explanatory announcement, "do not let his father be any check or restraint on your domestic occupations, Miss Varden."

"Oh! Now! There! An't I always a saying it?" exclaimed Miggs, clapping her hands. "If he an't been and took missis for her own daughter! Well, she *do* look like it, that she do. On'y think of that, mim!"

"Is it possible," said Mr. Chester in his softest tones, "that this is Mrs. Varden? I am amazed. That is not your daughter, Mrs. Varden? No, no. Your sister."

"My daughter, indeed, sir," returned Mrs. V., blushing with great juvenility.

"Ah, Mrs. Varden!" cried the visitor. "Ah, ma'am—humanity is indeed a happy lot when we can repeat ourselves in others, and still be young as they. You must allow me to salute you—the custom of the country, my dear madam—your daughter too."

Dolly showed some reluctance to perform this ceremony, but was sharply reproved by Mrs. Varden, who insisted on her undergoing it that minute. For pride, she said with great severity, was one of the seven deadly sins, and humility and lowliness of heart were virtues. Wherefore she desired that Dolly would be kissed immediately, on pain of her just displeasure; at the same time giving her to understand that whatever she saw her mother do, she might safely do herself, without being at the trouble of any reasoning or reflection on the subject—which, indeed, was offensive and undutiful, and in direct contravention of the Church Catechism.

Thus admonished, Dolly complied, though by no means willingly; for there was a broad, bold look of admiration in Mr. Chester's face, refined and polished though it sought to be, which distressed her very much. As she stood with downcast eyes, not liking to look up and meet his, he gazed upon her with an approving air, and then turned to her mother.

"My friend Gabriel (whose acquaintance I only made this very evening) should be a happy man, Mrs. Varden."

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. V., shaking her head.

"Ah!" echoed Miggs.

"Is that the case?" said Mr. Chester compassionately. "Dear me!"

"Master has no intentions, sir," murmured Miggs as she sidled up to him, "but to be as grateful as his natur will let him, for everythink he owns which it is in his powers to appreciate. But we never, sir"—said Miggs, looking sideways at Mrs. Varden, and interlarding her discourse with a sigh—"we never know the full value of *some* wines and fig-trees till we lose 'em.



So much the worse, sir, for them as has the slighting of 'em on their consciences when they're gone to be in full blow elsewhere." And Miss Miggs cast up her eyes to signify where that might be.

As Mrs. Varden distinctly heard, and was intended to hear, all that Miggs said, and as these words appeared to convey, in metaphorical terms, a presage or foreboding that she would at some early period droop beneath her trials and take an easy flight towards the stars, she immediately began to languish, and taking a volume of the Manual from a neighbouring table, leant her arm upon it as though she were Hope, and that her Anchor. Mr. Chester perceiving this, and seeing how the volume was lettered on the back, took it gently from her hand, and turned the fluttering leaves.

"My favourite book, dear madam. How often, how very often in his early life—before he can remember"—(this clause was strictly true)—"have I deduced little easy moral lessons from its pages for my dear son Ned! You know Ned?"

Mrs. Varden had that honour, and a fine affable young gentleman he was.

"You're a mother, Mrs. Varden," said Mr. Chester, taking a pinch of snuff, "and you know what I, as a father, feel when he is praised. He gives me some uneasiness—much uneasiness—he's of a roving nature, ma'am—from flower to flower—from sweet to sweet—but his is the butterfly time of life, and we must not be hard upon such trifling."

He glanced at Dolly. She was attending evidently to what he said. Just what he desired!

"The only thing I object to in this little trait of Ned's is," said Mr. Chester—"and the mention of his name reminds me, by the way, that I am about to beg the favour of a minute's talk with you alone—the only thing I object to in it, that it *does* partake of insincerity. Now, however I may attempt to disguise the fact from myself in my affection for Ned, still I always revert to this—that if we are not sincere, we are nothing. Nothing upon earth. Let us be sincere, my dear madam—"

"—And Protestant," murmured Mrs. Varden.

"—And Protestant above all things. Let us be sincere and Protestant, strictly moral, strictly just (though always with a leaning towards mercy), strictly honest, and strictly true, and we gain—it is a slight point, certainly, but still it is something tangible; so we throw up a groundwork and foundation, so to speak, of goodness, on

which we may afterwards erect some worthy superstructure."

Now, to be sure, Mrs. Varden thought, here is a perfect character. Here is a meek, righteous, thorough-going Christian, who, having mastered all these qualities, so difficult of attainment; who, having dropped a pinch of salt on the tails of all the cardinal virtues, and caught them every one; makes light of their possession, and pants for more morality. For the good woman never doubted (as many good men and women never do) that this slighting kind of profession, this setting so little store by great matters, this seeming to say, "I am not proud, I am what you hear, but I consider myself no better than other people; let us change the subject, pray"—was perfectly genuine and true. He so contrived it, and said it in that way that it appeared to have been forced from him, and its effect was marvellous.

Aware of the impression he had made—few men were quicker than he at such discoveries—Mr. Chester followed up the blow by propounding certain virtuous maxims, somewhat vague and general in their nature, doubtless, and occasionally partaking of the character of truisms, worn a little out at elbow, but delivered in so charming a voice, and with such uncommon serenity and peace of mind, that they answered as well as the best. Nor is this to be wondered at; for, as hollow vessels produce a far more musical sound in falling than those which are substantial, so it will oftentimes be found that sentiments which have nothing in them make the loudest ringing in the world, and are the most relished.

Mr. Chester, with the volume gently extended in one hand, and with the other planted lightly on his breast, talked to them in the most delicious manner possible; and quite enchanted all his hearers, notwithstanding their conflicting interests and thoughts. Even Dolly, who, between his keen regards and her eyeing over by Mr. Tappetit, was put quite out of countenance, could not help owning within herself that he was the sweetest-spoken gentleman she had ever seen. Even Miss Miggs, who was divided between admiration of Mr. Chester and a mortal jealousy of her young mistress, had sufficient leisure to be propitiated. Even Mr. Tappetit, though occupied as we have seen in gazing at his heart's delight, could not wholly divert his thoughts from the voice of the other charmer. Mrs. Varden, to her own private thinking, had never been so improved in all her life: and when Mr. Chester, rising and craving permission to speak with her apart, took her by the hand and

led her at arm's length up-stairs to the best sitting-room, she almost deemed him something more than human.

"Dear madam," he said, pressing her hand delicately to his lips; "be seated."

Mrs. Varden called up quite a courtly air, and became seated.

"You guess my object?" said Mr. Chester, drawing a chair towards her. "You divine my purpose? I am an affectionate parent, my dear Mrs. Varden."

"That I am sure you are, sir," said Mrs. V.

"Thank you," returned Mr. Chester, tapping his snuff-box lid. "Heavy moral responsibilities rest with parents, Mrs. Varden."

Mrs. Varden slightly raised her hands, shook her head, and looked at the ground as though she saw straight through the globe, out at the other end, and into the immensity of space beyond.

"I may confide in you," said Mr. Chester, "without reserve. I love my son, ma'am, dearly; and, loving him as I do, I would save him from working certain misery. You know of his attachment to Miss Haredale. You have abetted him in it, and very kind of you it was to do so. I am deeply obliged to you—most deeply obliged to you—for your interest in his behalf; but, my dear ma'am, it is a mistaken one, I do assure you."

Mrs. Varden stammered that she was sorry—

"Sorry, my dear ma'am!" he interposed. "Never be sorry for what is so very amiable, so very good in intention, so perfectly like yourself. But there are grave and weighty reasons, pressing family considerations, and, apart even from these, points of religious difference, which interpose themselves, and render their union impossible; utterly impossible. I should have mentioned these circumstances to your husband; but he has—you will excuse my saying this so freely—he has *not* your quickness of apprehension or depth of moral sense. What an extremely airy house this is, and how beautifully kept! For one like myself—a widower so long—these tokens of female care and superintendence have inexpressible charms."

Mrs. Varden began to think (she scarcely knew why) that the young Mr. Chester must be in the wrong, and the old Mr. Chester must be in the right.

"My son Ned," resumed her tempter with his most winning air, "has had, I am told, your lovely daughter's aid, and your open-hearted husband's."

"—Much more than mine, sir," said Mrs.

Varden; "a great deal more. I have often had my doubts. It's a——"

"A bad example," suggested Mr. Chester. "It is. No doubt it is. Your daughter is at that age when to set before her an encouragement for young persons to rebel against their parents on this most important point is particularly injudicious. You are quite right. I ought to have thought of that myself, but it escaped me, I confess—so far superior are your sex to ours, dear madam, in point of penetration and sagacity."

Mrs. Varden looked as wise as if she had really said something to deserve this compliment—firmly believed she had, in short—and her faith in her own shrewdness increased considerably.

"My dear ma'am," said Mr. Chester, "you embolden me to be plain with you. My son and I are at variance on this point. The young lady and her natural guardian differ upon it also. And the closing point is, that my son is bound, by his duty to me, by his honour, by every solemn tie and obligation, to marry some one else."

"Engaged to marry another lady!" quoth Mrs. Varden, holding up her hands.

"My dear madam, brought up, educated, and trained expressly for that purpose. Expressly for that purpose.—Miss Haredale, I am told, is a very charming creature."

"I am her foster-mother, and should know—the best young lady in the world," said Mrs. Varden.

"I have not the smallest doubt of it. I am sure she is. And you, who have stood in that tender relation towards her, are bound to consult her happiness. Now, can I—as I have said to Haredale, who quite agrees—can I possibly stand by, and suffer her to throw herself away (although she *is* of a Catholic family) upon a young fellow who, as yet, has no heart at all? It is no imputation upon him to say he has not, because young men who have plunged deeply into the frivolities and conventionalities of society very seldom have. Their hearts never grow, my dear ma'am, till after thirty. I don't believe, no, I do *not* believe, that I had any heart myself when I was Ned's age."

"Oh, sir," said Mrs. Varden, "I think you must have had. It's impossible that you, who have so much now, can ever have been without any."

"I hope," he answered, shrugging his shoulders meekly, "I have a little; I hope, a very little—Heaven knows! But to return to Ned: I have no doubt you thought, and therefore in-



terfered benevolently in his behalf, that I objected to Miss Haredale. How very natural! My dear madam, I object to him—to him—*emphatically* to Ned himself.”

Mrs. Varden was perfectly aghast at the disclosure.

“He has, if he honourably fulfils this solemn obligation of which I have told you—and he must be honourable, dear Mrs Varden, or he is no son of mine—a fortune within his reach. He is of most expensive, ruinously expensive habits; and if, in a moment of caprice and wilfulness, he were to marry this young lady, and so deprive himself of the means of gratifying the tastes to which he has been so long accustomed, he would—my dear madam, he would break the gentle creature’s heart. Mrs. Varden, my good lady, my dear soul, I put it to you—is such a sacrifice to be endured? Is the female heart a thing to be trifled with in this way? Ask your own, my dear madam. Ask your own, I beseech you.”

“Truly,” thought Mrs Varden, “this gentleman is a saint. But,” she added aloud, and not unnaturally, “if you take Miss Emma’s lover away, sir, what becomes of the poor thing’s heart then?”

“The very point,” said Mr. Chester, not at all abashed, “to which I wished to lead you. A marriage with my son, whom I should be compelled to disown, would be followed by years of misery; they would be separated, my dear madam, in a twelvemonth. To break off this attachment, which is more fancied than real, as you and I know very well, will cost the dear girl but a few tears, and she is happy again. Take the case of your own daughter, the young lady down-stairs, who is your breathing image”—Mrs. Varden coughed and simpered—“there is a young man, (I am sorry to say, a dissolute fellow, of very indifferent character,) of whom I have heard Ned speak—Bullet was it—Pullet—Mullet—”

“There is a young man of the name of Joseph Willet, sir,” said Mrs. Varden, folding her hands loftily.

“That’s he,” cried Mr. Chester. “Suppose this Joseph Willet, now, were to aspire to the affections of your charming daughter, and were to engage them?”

“It would be like his impudence,” interposed Mrs. Varden, bristling, “to dare to think of such a thing!”

“My dear madam, that’s the whole case. I know it would be like his impudence. It is like Ned’s impudence to do as he has done; but you would not on that account, or because of a few

tears from your beautiful daughter, refrain from checking their inclinations in their birth. I meant to have reasoned thus with your husband when I saw him at Mrs. Rudge’s this evening——”

“My husband,” said Mrs. Varden, interposing with emotion, “would be a great deal better at home than going to Mrs. Rudge’s so often. I don’t know what he does there. I don’t see what occasion he has to busy himself in her affairs at all, sir.”

“If I don’t appear to express my concurrence in those last sentiments of yours,” returned Mr. Chester, “quite so strongly as you might desire, it is because his being there, my dear madam, and not proving conversational, led me hither, and procured me the happiness of this interview with one in whom the whole management, conduct, and prosperity of her family are centred, I perceive.”

With that he shook Mrs. Varden’s hand again, and having pressed it to his lips with the high-flown gallantry of the day—a little burlesqued, to render it the more striking in the good lady’s unaccustomed eyes—proceeded in the same strain of mingled sophistry, cajolery, and flattery, to entreat that her utmost influence might be exerted to restrain her husband and daughter from any further promotion of Edward’s suit to Miss Haredale, and from aiding or abetting either party in any way. Mrs. Varden was but a woman, and had her share of vanity, obstinacy, and love of power. She entered into a secret treaty of alliance, offensive and defensive, with her insinuating visitor; and really did believe, as many others would have done who saw and heard him, that in so doing she furthered the ends of truth, justice, and morality in a very uncommon degree.

Overjoyed by the success of his negotiation, and mightily amused within himself, Mr. Chester conducted her down-stairs in the same state as before; and having repeated the previous ceremony of salutation, which also, as before, comprehended Dolly, took his leave; first completing the conquest of Miss Miggs’s heart by inquiring if “this young lady” would light him to the door.

“Oh, mim!” said Miggs, returning with the candle. “Oh, gracious me, mim, there’s a gentleman! Was there ever such an angel to talk as he is—and such a sweet-looking man? So upright and noble, that he seems to despise the very ground he walks on; and yet so mild and condescending, that he seems to say, ‘But I will take notice on it too.’ And to think of his taking you for Miss Dolly, and Miss Dolly for

your sister! Oh, my goodness me, if I was master, wouldn't I be jealous of him!"

Mrs. Varden reproved her handmaid for this vain speaking; but very gently and mildly—quite smilingly indeed—remarking that she was a foolish, giddy, light-headed girl, whose spirits carried her beyond all bounds, and who didn't mean half she said, or she would be quite angry with her.

"For my part," said Dolly in a thoughtful manner, "I half believe Mr. Chester is something like Miggs in that respect. For all his politeness and pleasant speaking, I am pretty sure he was making game of us more than once."

"If you venture to say such a thing again, and to speak ill of people behind their backs in my presence, miss," said Mrs. Varden, "I shall insist upon your taking a candle and going to bed directly. How dare you, Dolly? I'm astonished at you. The rudeness of your whole behaviour this evening has been disgraceful. Did anybody ever hear," cried the enraged matron, bursting into tears, "of a daughter telling her own mother she had been made game of?"

What a very uncertain temper Mrs. Varden's was!

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

**R**PAIRING to a noted coffee-house in Covent Garden when he left the locksmith's, Mr. Chester sat long over a late dinner, entertaining himself exceedingly with the whimsical recollection of his recent proceedings, and congratulating himself very much on his great cleverness. Influenced by these thoughts, his face wore an expression so benign and tranquil, that the waiter in immediate attendance upon him felt he could almost have died in his defence, and settled in his own mind (until the receipt of the bill, and a very small fee for very great trouble, disabused it of the idea) that such an apostolic customer was worth half-a-dozen of the ordinary run of visitors, at least.

A visit to the gaming-table—not as a heated, anxious venturer, but one whom it was quite a treat to see staking his two or three pieces in deference to the follies of society, and smiling with equal benevolence on winners and losers—made it late before he reached home. It was his custom to bid his servant go to bed at his own time unless he had orders to the contrary, and to leave a candle on the common stair. There was a lamp on the landing by which he

could always light it when he came home late, and having a key of the door about him, he could enter and go to bed at his pleasure.

He opened the glass of the dull lamp, whose wick, burnt up and swollen like a drunkard's nose, came flying off in little carbuncles at the candle's touch, and scattering hot sparks about, rendered it matter of some difficulty to kindle the lazy taper; when a noise, as of a man snoring deeply some steps higher up, caused him to pause and listen. It was the heavy breathing of a sleeper close at hand. Some fellow had lain down on the open staircase, and was slumbering soundly. Having lighted the candle at length, and opened his own door, he softly ascended, holding the taper high above his head, and peering cautiously about; curious to see what kind of man had chosen so comfortless a shelter for his lodging.

With his head upon the landing, and his great limbs flung over half-a-dozen stairs, as carelessly as though he were a dead man whom drunken bearers had thrown down by chance, there lay Hugh, face uppermost, his long hair drooping like some wild weed upon his wooden pillow, and his huge chest heaving with the sounds which so unwontedly disturbed the place and hour. He who came upon him so unexpectedly was about to break his rest by thrusting him with his foot, when, glancing at his upturned face, he arrested himself in the very action, and stooping down and shading the candle with his hand, examined his features closely. Close as his first inspection was, it did not suffice, for he passed the light, still carefully shaded as before, across and across his face, and yet observed him with a searching eye.

While he was thus engaged, the sleeper, without any starting or turning round, awoke. There was a kind of fascination in meeting his steady gaze so suddenly, which took from the other the presence of mind to withdraw his eyes, and forced him, as it were, to meet his look. So they remained staring at each other, until Mr. Chester at last broke silence, and asked him, in a low voice, why he lay sleeping there.

"I thought," said Hugh, struggling into a sitting posture and gazing at him intently still, "that you were a part of my dream. It was a curious one. I hope it may never come true, master."

"What makes you shiver?"

"The—the cold, I suppose," he growled as he shook himself and rose. "I hardly know where I am yet."

"Do you know me?" said Mr. Chester.

"Ay, I know you," he answered. "I was



dreaming of you—we're not where I thought we were. That's a comfort."

He looked round him as he spoke, and in particular looked above his head, as though he half expected to be standing under some object which had had existence in his dream. Then he rubbed his eyes and shook himself again, and followed his conductor into his own rooms.

Mr. Chester lighted the candles which stood upon his dressing-table, and wheeling an easy-chair towards the fire, which was yet burning, stirred up a cheerful blaze, sat down before it, and bade his uncomely visitor "Come here," and draw his boots off.

"You have been drinking again, my fine fellow," he said, as Hugh went down on one knee, and did as he was told.

"As I'm alive, master, I've walked the twelve long miles, and waited here I don't know how long, and had no drink between my lips since dinner-time at noon."

"And can you do nothing better, my pleasant friend, than fall asleep, and shake the very building with your snores?" said Mr. Chester. "Can't you dream in your straw at home, dull dog as you are, that you need come here to do it?—Reach me those slippers, and tread softly."

Hugh obeyed in silence.

"And harkee, my dear young gentleman," said Mr. Chester as he put them on, "the next time you dream, don't let it be of me, but of some dog or horse with whom you are better acquainted. Fill the glass once—you'll find it and the bottle in the same place—and empty it to keep yourself awake."

Hugh obeyed again—even more zealously—and having done so, presented himself before his patron.

"Now," said Mr. Chester, "what do you want with me?"

"There was news to-day," returned Hugh. "Your son was at our house—came down on horseback. He tried to see the young woman, but couldn't get sight of her. He left some letter or some message, which our Joe had charge of, but he and the old one quarrelled about it when your son had gone, and the old one wouldn't let it be delivered. He says (that's the old one does) that none of his people shall interfere and get him into trouble. He's a landlord he says, and lives on everybody's custom."

"He is a jewel," smiled Mr. Chester, "and the better for being a dull one.—Well?"

"Varden's daughter—that's the girl I kissed—"

"—And stole the bracelet from upon the

king's highway," said Mr. Chester composedly. "Yes; what of her?"

"She wrote a note at our house to the young woman, saying she lost the letter I brought to you, and you burnt. Our Joe was to carry it, but the old one kept him at home all next day, on purpose that he shouldn't. Next morning he gave it to me to take; and here it is."

"You didn't deliver it then, my good friend?" said Mr. Chester, twirling Dolly's note between his finger and thumb, and feigning to be surprised.

"I supposed you'd want to have it," retorted Hugh. "Burn one, burn all, I thought."

"My devil-may-care acquaintance," said Mr. Chester—"really, if you do not draw some nicer distinctions, your career will be cut short with most surprising suddenness. Don't you know that the letter you brought to me was directed to my son, who resides in this very place? And can you descry no difference between his letters and those addressed to other people?"

"If you don't want it," said Hugh, disconcerted by this reproof, for he had expected high praise, "give it me back, and I'll deliver it. I don't know how to please you, master."

"I shall deliver it," returned his patron, putting it away after a moment's consideration, "myself. Does the young lady walk out on fine mornings?"

"Mostly—about noon is her usual time."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone."

"Where?"

"In the grounds before the house. Them that the footpath crosses."

"If the weather should be fine, I may throw myself in her way to-morrow, perhaps," said Mr. Chester, as coolly as if she were one of his ordinary acquaintance. "Mr. Hugh, if I should ride up to the Maypole door, you will do me the favour only to have seen me once. You must suppress your gratitude, and endeavour to forget my forbearance in the matter of the bracelet. It is natural it should break out, and it does you honour; but, when other folks are by, you must, for your own sake and safety, be as like your usual self as though you owed me no obligation whatever, and had never stood within these walls. You comprehend me?"

Hugh understood him perfectly. After a pause he muttered that he hoped his patron would involve him in no trouble about this last letter, for he had kept it back solely with the view of pleasing him. He was continuing in this strain, when Mr. Chester, with a most

beneficent and patronising air, cut him short by saying:

"My good fellow, you have my promise, my word, my sealed bond (for a verbal pledge with me is quite as good), that I will always protect you so long as you deserve it. Now, do set your mind at rest. Keep it at ease, I beg of you. When a man puts himself in my power so thoroughly as you have done, I really feel as though he had a kind of claim upon me. I am more disposed to mercy and forbearance under such circumstances than I can tell you, Hugh. Do look upon me as your protector, and rest assured, I entreat you, that on the subject of that indiscretion you may preserve, as long as you and I are friends, the lightest heart that ever beat within a human breast. Fill that glass once more to cheer you on your road homewards—I am really quite ashamed to think how far you have to go—and then God bless you for the night."

"They think," said Hugh, when he had tossed the liquor down, "that I am sleeping soundly in the stable. Ha, ha, ha! The stable door is shut, but the steed's gone, master."

"You are a most convivial fellow," returned his friend, "and I love your humour of all things. Good night! Take the greatest possible care of yourself, for my sake!"

It was remarkable that, during the whole interview, each had endeavoured to catch stolen glances of the other's face, and had never looked full at it. They interchanged one brief and hasty glance as Hugh went out, averted their eyes directly, and so separated. Hugh closed the double doors behind him carefully and without noise; and Mr. Chester remained in his easy-chair, with his gaze intently fixed upon the fire.

"Well!" he said after meditating for a long time—and said with a deep sigh and an uneasy shifting of his attitude, as though he dismissed some other subject from his thoughts, and returned to that which had held possession of them all the day—"the plot thickens; I have thrown the shell; it will explode, I think, in eight-and-forty hours, and should scatter these good folks amazingly. We shall see!"

He went to bed and fell asleep, but had not slept long when he started up and thought that Hugh was at the outer door, calling in a strange voice, very different from his own, to be admitted. The delusion was so strong upon him, and was so full of that vague terror of the night in which such visions have their being, that he rose, and taking his sheathed sword in his hand, opened the door, and looked out upon

the staircase, and towards the spot where Hugh had lain asleep; and even spoke to him by name. But all was dark and quiet, and creeping back to bed again, he fell, after an hour's uneasy watching, into a second sleep, and woke no more till morning.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

**T**HE thoughts of worldly men are for ever regulated by a moral law of gravitation, which, like the physical one, holds them down to earth. The bright glory of day, and the silent wonders of a star-lit night, appeal to their minds in vain. There are no signs in the sun, or in the moon, or in the stars, for their reading. They are like some wise men, who, learning to know each planet by its Latin name, have quite forgotten such small heavenly constellations as Charity, Forbearance, Universal Love, and Mercy, although they shine by night and day so brightly that the blind may see them; and who, looking upward at the spangled sky, see nothing there but the reflection of their own great wisdom and book-learning.

It is curious to imagine these people of the world, busy in thought, turning their eyes toward the countless spheres that shine above us, and making them reflect the only images their minds contain. The man who lives but in the breath of princes has nothing in his sight but stars for courtiers' breasts. The envious man beholds his neighbours' honours even in the sky; to the money-hoarder, and the mass of worldly folk, the whole great universe above glitters with sterling coin—fresh from the mint—stamped with the sovereign's head, coming always between them and heaven, turn where they may. So do the shadows of our own desires stand between us and our better angels, and thus their brightness is eclipsed.

Everything was fresh and gay, as though the world were but that morning made, when Mr. Chester rode at a tranquil pace along the Forest road. Though early in the season, it was warm and genial weather; the trees were budding into leaf, the hedges and the grass were green, the air was musical with songs of birds, and high above them all the lark poured out her richest melody. In shady spots the morning dew sparkled on each young leaf and blade of grass; and, where the sun was shining, some diamond drops yet glistened brightly, as in unwillingness



to leave so fair a world, and have such brief existence. Even the light wind, whose rustling was as gentle to the ear as softly-falling water, had its hope and promise; and, leaving a pleasant fragrance in its track as it went fluttering by, whispered of its intercourse with Summer, and of his happy coming.

The solitary rider went glancing on among the trees, from sun-light into shade and back again, at the same even pace—looking about him, certainly, from time to time, but with no greater thought of the day or the scene through which he moved than that he was fortunate (being choicely dressed) to have such favourable weather. He smiled very complacently at such times, but rather as if he were satisfied with himself than with anything else: and so went riding on upon his chestnut cob, as pleasant to look upon as his own horse, and probably far less sensitive to the many cheerful influences by which he was surrounded.

In course of time the Maypole's massive chimneys rose upon his view: but he quickened not his pace one jot, and with the same cool gravity rode up to the tavern porch. John Willet, who was toasting his red face before a great fire in the bar, and who, with surpassing foresight and quickness of apprehension, had been thinking, as he looked at the blue sky, that if that state of things lasted much longer, it might ultimately become necessary to leave off fires and throw the windows open, issued forth to hold his stirrup; calling lustily for Hugh.

"Oh, you're here, are you, sir?" said John, rather surprised by the quickness with which he appeared. "Take this here valuable animal into the stable, and have more than particular care of him, if you want to keep your place. A mortal lazy fellow, sir; he needs a deal of looking after."

"But you have a son," returned Mr. Chester, giving his bridle to Hugh as he dismounted, and acknowledging his salute by a careless motion of his hand towards his hat. "Why don't you make *him* useful?"

"Why, the truth is, sir," replied John with great importance, "that my son— What, you're a listening, are you, villain?"

"Who's listening?" returned Hugh angrily. "A treat, indeed, to hear *you* speak! Would you have me take him in till he's cool?"

"Walk him up and down further off then, sir," cried old John, "and when you see me and a noble gentleman entertaining ourselves with talk, keep your distance. If you don't know your distance, sir," added Mr. Willet after an

enormously long pause, during which he fixed his great dull eyes on Hugh, and waited with exemplary patience for any little property in the way of ideas that might be coming to him, "we'll find a way to teach you pretty soon."

Hugh shrugged his shoulders scornfully, and, in his reckless swaggering way, crossed to the other side of the little green, and there, with the bridle slung loosely over his shoulder, led the horse to and fro, glancing at his master every now and then, from under his bushy eyebrows, with as sinister an aspect as one would desire to see.

Mr. Chester, who, without appearing to do so, had eyed him attentively during this brief dispute, stepped into the porch, and turning abruptly to Mr. Willet, said,

"You keep strange servants, John."

"Strange enough to look at, sir, certainly," answered the host; "but out of doors; for horses, dogs, and the like of that; there an't a better man in England than is that Maypole Hugh yonder. He an't fit for indoors," added Mr. Willet, with the confidential air of a man who felt his own superior nature; "I do that; but if that chap had only a little imagination, sir—"

"He's an active fellow now, I dare swear," said Mr. Chester in a musing tone, which seemed to suggest that he would have said the same had there been nobody to hear him.

"Active, sir!" retorted John, with quite an expression in his face; "that chap! Hallo there! You, sir! Bring that horse here, and go and hang my wig on the weathercock, to show this gentleman whether you're one of the lively sort or not."

Hugh made no answer, but throwing the bridle to his master, and snatching his wig from his head in a manner so unceremonious and hasty that the action discomposed Mr. Willet not a little, though performed at his own special desire, climbed nimbly to the very summit of the maypole before the house, and hanging the wig upon the weathercock, sent it twirling round like a roasting-jack. Having achieved this performance, he cast it on the ground, and sliding down the pole with inconceivable rapidity, alighted on his feet almost as soon as it had touched the earth.

"There, sir," said John, relapsing into his usual stolid state, "you won't see that at many houses besides the Maypole, where there's good accommodation for man and beast—nor that neither, though that with him is nothing."

This last remark bore reference to his vaulting on horseback, as upon Mr. Chester's first

visit, and quickly disappearing by the stable gate.

"That with him is nothing," repeated Mr. Willet, brushing his wig with his wrist, and inwardly resolving to distribute a small charge for dust and damage to that article of dress through the various items of his guest's bill; "he'll get out of a'most any winder in the house. There never was such a chap for flinging himself about, and never hurting his bones. It's my opinion, sir, that it's pretty nearly all owing to his not having any imagination; and that, if imagination could be (which it can't) knocked into him, he'd never be able to do it any more. But we was a talking, sir, about my son."

"True, Willet, true," said his visitor, turning again towards the landlord with his accustomed serenity of face. "My good friend, what about him?"

It has been reported that Mr. Willet, previously to making answer, winked. But, as he never was known to be guilty of such lightness of conduct either before or afterwards, this may be looked upon as a malicious invention of his enemies—founded, perhaps, upon the undisputed circumstance of his taking his guest by the third breast button of his coat, counting downwards from the chin, and pouring his reply into his ear.

"Sir," whispered John with dignity, "I know my duty. We want no love-making here, sir, unbeknown to parents. I respect a certain young gentleman, taking him in the light of a young gentleman; I respect a certain young lady, taking her in the light of a young lady; but of the two as a couple I have no knowledge, sir, none whatever. My son, sir, is upon his patrol."

"I thought I saw him looking through the corner window but this moment," said Mr. Chester, who naturally thought that being on patrol implied walking about somewhere.

"No doubt you did, sir," returned John. "He is upon his patrol of honour, sir, not to leave the premises. Me and some friends of mine that use the Maypole of an evening, sir, considered what was best to be done with him to prevent his doing anything unpleasant in opposing your desires; and we've put him on his patrol. And what's more, sir, he won't be off his patrol for a pretty long time to come, I can tell you that."

When he had communicated this bright idea, which had had its origin in the perusal by the village cronies of a newspaper containing, among other matters, an account of how some officer pending the sentence of some court-martial had

been enlarged on parole, Mr. Willet drew back from his guest's ear, and without any visible alteration of feature, chuckled thrice audibly. This nearest approach to a laugh in which he ever indulged (and that but seldom, and only on extreme occasions), never even curled his lip or effected the smallest change in—no, not so much as a slight wagging of—his great, fat, double chin, which at these times, as at all others, remained a perfect desert in the broad map of his face; one changeless, dull, tremendous blank.

Lest it should be matter of surprise to any that Mr. Willet adopted this bold course in opposition to one whom he had often entertained, and who had always paid his way at the Maypole gallantly, it may be remarked that it was his very penetration and sagacity in this respect which occasioned him to indulge in those unusual demonstrations of jocularly just now recorded. For Mr. Willet, after carefully balancing father and son in his mental scales, had arrived at the distinct conclusion that the old gentleman was a better sort of customer than the young one. Throwing his landlord into the same scale, which was already turned by this consideration, and heaping upon him, again, his strong desires to run counter to the unfortunate Joe, and his opposition, as a general principle, to all matters of love and matrimony, it went down to the very ground straightway, and sent the light cause of the younger gentleman flying upwards to the ceiling. Mr. Chester was not the kind of man to be by any means dim-sighted to Mr. Willet's motives, but he thanked him as graciously as if he had been one of the most disinterested martyrs that ever shone on earth; and leaving him, with many complimentary reliances on his great taste and judgment, to prepare whatever dinner he might deem most fitting the occasion, bent his steps towards the Warren.

Dressed with more than his usual elegance; assuming a gracefulness of manner which, though it was the result of long study, sat easily upon him, and became him well; composing his features into their most serene and prepossessing expression; and setting, in short, that guard upon himself, at every point, which denoted that he attached no slight importance to the impression he was about to make; he entered the bounds of Miss Haredale's usual walk. He had not gone far, or looked about him long, when he descried coming towards him a female figure. A glimpse of the form and dress, as she crossed a little wooden bridge which lay between them, satisfied him that he had found her whom he desired to see. He threw himself in her



way, and a very few paces brought them close together.

He raised his hat from his head, and yielding the path, suffered her to pass him. Then, as if the idea had but that moment occurred to him,

he turned hastily back and said in an agitated voice :

“I beg pardon—do I address Miss Hare-dale?”

She stopped in some confusion at being so



“I BEG PARDON—DO I ADDRESS MISS HAREDALE?”

unexpectedly accosted by a stranger; and answered “Yes.”

“Something told me,” he said, *looking* a compliment to her beauty, “that it could be no other. Miss Hare-dale, I bear a name which is not unknown to you—which it is a pride, and yet a pain to me to know, sounds pleasantly in

your ears. I am a man advanced in life, as you see. I am the father of him whom you honour and distinguish above all other men. May I, for weighty reasons which fill me with distress, beg but a minute's conversation with you here?”

Who that was inexperienced in deceit, and had

a frank and youthful heart, could doubt the speaker's truth—could doubt it, too, when the voice that spoke was like the faint echo of one she knew so well, and so much loved to hear? She inclined her head, and stopping, cast her eyes upon the ground.

"A little more apart—among these trees. It is an old man's hand, Miss Haredale; an honest one, believe me."

She put hers in it as he said these words, and suffered him to lead her to a neighbouring seat.

"You alarm me, sir," she said in a low voice. "You are not the bearer of any ill news, I hope?"

"Of none that you anticipate," he answered, sitting down beside her. "Edward is well—quite well. It is of him I wish to speak, certainly; but I have no misfortune to communicate."

She bowed her head again, and made as though she would have begged him to proceed; but said nothing.

"I am sensible that I speak to you at a disadvantage, dear Miss Haredale. Believe me that I am not so forgetful of the feelings of my younger days as not to know that you are little disposed to view me with favour. You have heard me described as cold-hearted, calculating, selfish——"

"I have never, sir," she interposed with an altered manner and a firmer voice; "I have never heard you spoken of in harsh or disrespectful terms. You do a great wrong to Edward's nature if you believe him capable of any mean or base proceeding."

"Pardon me, my sweet young lady, but your uncle——"

"Nor is it my uncle's nature either," she replied, with a heightened colour in her cheek. "It is not his nature to stab in the dark, nor is it mine to love such deeds."

She rose as she spoke, and would have left him; but he detained her with a gentle hand, and besought her in such persuasive accents to hear him but another minute, that she was easily prevailed upon to comply, and so sat down again.

"And it is," said Mr. Chester, looking upward, and apostrophising the air; "it is this frank, ingenuous, noble nature, Ned, that you can wound so lightly. Shame—shame upon you, boy!"

She turned towards him quickly, and with a scornful look and flashing eyes. There were tears in Mr. Chester's, but he dashed them hurriedly away, as though unwilling that his weakness should be known, and regarded her with mingled admiration and compassion.

"I never until now," he said, "believed that the frivolous actions of a young man could move me like these of my own son. I never knew till now the worth of a woman's heart, which boys so lightly win, and lightly fling away. Trust me, dear young lady, that I never until now did know your worth; and though an abhorrence of deceit and falsehood has impelled me to seek you out, and would have done so had you been the poorest and least gifted of your sex, I should have lacked the fortitude to sustain this interview, could I have pictured you to my imagination as you really are."

Oh! If Mrs. Varden could have seen the virtuous gentleman as he said these words, with indignation sparkling from his eyes—if she could have heard his broken, quavering voice—if she could have beheld him as he stood bareheaded in the sun-light, and with unwonted energy poured forth his eloquence!

With a haughty face, but pale and trembling too, Emma regarded him in silence. She neither spoke nor moved, but gazed upon him as though she would look into his heart.

"I throw off," said Mr. Chester, "the restraint which natural affection would impose on some men, and reject all bonds but those of truth and duty. Miss Haredale, you are deceived; you are deceived by your unworthy lover, and my unworthy son."

Still she looked at him steadily, and still said not one word.

"I have ever opposed his professions of love for you; you will do me the justice, dear Miss Haredale, to remember that. Your uncle and myself were enemies in early life, and if I had sought retaliation, I might have found it here. But, as we grow older, we grow wiser—better, I would fain hope—and from the first I have opposed him in this attempt. I foresaw the end, and would have spared you if I could."

"Speak plainly, sir," she faltered. "You deceive me, or are deceived yourself. I do not believe you—I cannot—I should not."

"First," said Mr. Chester soothingly, "for there may be in your mind some latent angry feeling to which I would not appeal, pray take this letter. It reached my hands by chance, and by mistake, and should have accounted to you (as I am told) for my son's not answering some other note of yours. God forbid, Miss Haredale," said the good gentleman with great emotion, "that there should be in your gentle breast one causeless ground of quarrel with him. You should know, and you will see, that he was in no fault here."

There appeared something so very candid, so



scrupulously honourable, so very truthful and just in this course—something which rendered the upright person who resorted to it so worthy of belief—that Emma's heart, for the first time, sunk within her. She turned away, and burst into tears.

"I would," said Mr. Chester, leaning over her, and speaking in mild and quite venerable accents; "I would, dear girl, it were my task to banish, not increase, those tokens of your grief. My son, my erring son,—I will not call him deliberately criminal in this, for men so young, who have been inconstant twice or thrice before, act without reflection, almost without a knowledge of the wrong they do,—will break his plighted faith to you; has broken it even now. Shall I stop here, and, having given you this warning, leave it to be fulfilled; or shall I go on?"

"You will go on, sir," she answered, "and speak more plainly yet, in justice both to him and me."

"My dear girl," said Mr. Chester, bending over her more affectionately still; "whom I would call my daughter, but the Fates forbid, Edward seeks to break with you upon a false and most unwarrantable pretence. I have it on his own showing; in his own hand. Forgive me if I have had a watch upon his conduct; I am his father; I had a regard for your peace and his honour, and no better resource was left me. There lies on his desk at this moment, ready for transmission to you, a letter in which he tells you that our poverty—our poverty; his and mine, Miss Haredale—forbids him to pursue his claim upon your hand; in which he offers, voluntarily proposes, to free you from your pledge; and talks magnanimously (men do so, very commonly, in such cases) of being in time more worthy your regard—and so forth. A letter, to be plain, in which he not only jilts you—pardon the word; I would summon to your aid your pride and dignity—not only jilts you, I fear, in favour of the object whose slighting treatment first inspired his brief passion for yourself, and gave it birth in wounded vanity, but affects to make a merit and a virtue of the act."

She glanced proudly at him once more, as by an involuntary impulse, and with a swelling breast rejoined, "If what you say be true, he takes much needless trouble, sir, to compass his design. He is very tender of my peace of mind. I quite thank him."

"The truth of what I tell you, dear young lady," he replied, "you will test by the receipt or non-receipt of the letter of which I speak.—Haredale, my dear fellow, I am delighted to see

you, although we meet under singular circumstances, and upon a melancholy occasion. I hope you are very well."

At these words the young lady raised her eyes, which were filled with tears; and seeing that her uncle indeed stood before them, and being quite unequal to the trial of hearing or speaking one word more, hurriedly withdrew, and left them. They stood looking at each other, and at her retreating figure, and for a long time neither of them spoke.

"What does this mean? Explain it," said Mr. Haredale at length. "Why are you here, and why with her?"

"My dear friend," rejoined the other, resuming his accustomed manner with infinite readiness, and throwing himself upon the bench with a weary air, "you told me not very long ago, at that delightful old tavern of which you are the esteemed proprietor (and a most charming establishment it is for persons of rural pursuits and in robust health, who are not liable to take cold), that I had the head and heart of an evil spirit in all matters of deception. I thought at the time; I really did think; you flattered me. But now I begin to wonder at your discernment, and, vanity apart, do honestly believe you spoke the truth. Did you ever counterfeit extreme ingenuousness and honest indignation? My dear fellow, you have no conception, if you never did, how faint the effort makes one."

Mr. Haredale surveyed him with a look of cold contempt. "You may evade an explanation, I know," he said, folding his arms. "But I must have it. I can wait."

"Not at all. Not at all, my good fellow. You shall not wait a moment," returned his friend, as he lazily crossed his legs. "The simplest thing in the world. It lies in a nutshell. Ned has written her a letter—a boyish, honest, sentimental composition, which remains as yet in his desk, because he hasn't had the heart to send it. I have taken a liberty, for which my parental affection and anxiety are a sufficient excuse, and possessed myself of the contents. I have described them to your niece (a most enchanting person, Haredale; quite an angelic creature), with a little colouring and description adapted to our purpose. It's done. You may be quite easy. It's all over. Deprived of their adherents and mediators; her pride and jealousy roused to the utmost; with nobody to undeceive her, and you to confirm me; you will find that their intercourse will close with her answer. If she receives Ned's letter by to-morrow noon, you may date their parting from to-morrow night. No thanks, I beg; you

owe me none. I have acted for myself; and if I have forwarded our compact with all the ardour even you could have desired, I have done so selfishly, indeed."

"I curse the compact, as you call it, with my whole heart and soul," returned the other. "It was made in an evil hour. I have bound myself to a lie; I have leagued myself with you; and though I did so with a righteous motive, and though it cost me such an effort as haply few men know, I hate and despise myself for the deed."

"You are very warm," said Mr. Chester with a languid smile.

"I *am* warm. I am maddened by your coldness. 'Death, Chester, if your blood ran warmer in your veins, and there were no restraints upon me, such as those that hold and drag me back— Well, it is done; you tell me so, and on such a point I may believe you. When I am most remorseful for this treachery, I will think of you and your marriage, and try to justify myself in such remembrances for having torn asunder Emma and your son, at any cost. Our bond is cancelled now, and we may part."

Mr. Chester kissed his hand gracefully; and with the same tranquil face he had preserved throughout—even when he had seen his companion so tortured and transported by his passion that his whole frame was shaken—lay in his lounging posture on the seat, and watched him as he walked away.

"My scapegoat and my drudge at school," he said, raising his head to look after him; "my friend of later days, who could not keep his mistress when he had won her, and threw me in her way to carry off the prize; I triumph in the present and the past. Bark on, ill-favoured, ill-conditioned cur; fortune has ever been with me—I like to hear you."

The spot where they had met was in an avenue of trees. Mr. Haredale, not passing out on either hand, had walked straight on. He chanced to turn his head when at some considerable distance, and seeing that his late companion had by that time risen and was looking after him, stood still, as though he half expected him to follow, and waited for his coming up.

"It *may* come to that one day, but not yet," said Mr. Chester, waving his hand, as though they were the best of friends, and turning away. "Not yet, Haredale. Life is pleasant enough to me; dull and full of heaviness to you. No. To cross swords with such a man—to indulge his humour unless upon extremity—would be weak indeed."

For all that, he drew his sword as he walked

along, and in an absent humour ran his eye from hilt to point full twenty times. But thoughtfulness begets wrinkles. Remembering this, he soon put it up, smoothed his contracted brow, hummed a gay tune with greater gaiety of manner, and was his unruffled self again.

### CHAPTER XXX.



HOMELY proverb recognises the existence of a troublesome class of persons who, having an inch conceded them, will take an ell. Not to quote the illustrious examples of those heroic scourges of mankind, whose amiable path in life has been from birth to death through blood, and fire, and ruin, and who would seem to have existed for no better purpose than to teach mankind that as the absence of pain is pleasure, so the earth, purged of their presence, may be deemed a blessed place—not to quote such mighty instances, it will be sufficient to refer to old John Willet.

Old John having long encroached a good standard inch, full measure, on the liberty of Joe, and having snipped off a Flemish ell in the matter of the parole, grew so despotic and so great that his thirst for conquest knew no bounds. The more young Joe submitted, the more absolute old John became. The ell soon faded into nothing. Yards, furlongs, miles arose; and on went old John in the pleasantest manner possible, trimming off an exuberance in this place, shearing away some liberty of speech or action in that, and conducting himself in his small way with as much high mightiness and majesty as the most glorious tyrant that ever had his statue reared in the public ways, of ancient or of modern times.

As great men are urged on to the abuse of power (when they need urging, which is not often) by their flatterers and dependants, so old John was impelled to these exercises of authority by the applause and admiration of his Maypole cronies, who, in the intervals of their nightly pipes and pots, would shake their heads and say that Mr. Willet was a father of the good old English sort; that there were no new-fangled notions or modern ways in him; that he put them in mind of what their fathers were when they were boys; that there was no mistake about him; that it would be well for the country if there were more like him, and more was the pity that there were not; with many other



original remarks of that nature. Then they would condescendingly give Joe to understand that it was all for his good, and he would be thankful for it one day; and, in particular, Mr. Cobb would acquaint him that when he was his age, his father thought no more of giving him a parental kick, or a box on the ears, or a cuff on the head, or some little admonition of that sort, than he did of any other ordinary duty of life; and he would further remark, with looks of great significance, that but for this judicious bringing up, he might have never been the man he was at that present speaking; which was probable enough, as he was, beyond all question, the dullest dog of the party. In short, between old John, and old John's friends, there never was an unfortunate young fellow so bullied, badgered, worried, fretted, and browbeaten; so constantly beset, or made so tired of his life, as poor Joe Willet.

This had come to be the recognised and established state of things; but as John was very anxious to flourish his supremacy before the eyes of Mr. Chester, he did that day exceed himself, and did so goad and chafe his son and heir, that but for Joe's having made a solemn vow to keep his hands in his pockets when they were not otherwise engaged, it is impossible to say what he might have done with them. But the longest day has an end, and at length Mr. Chester came down-stairs to mount his horse, which was ready at the door.

As old John was not in the way at the moment, Joe, who was sitting in the bar ruminating on his dismal fate and the manifold perfections of Dolly Varden, ran out to hold the guest's stirrup, and assist him to mount. Mr. Chester was scarcely in the saddle, and Joe was in the very act of making him a graceful bow, when old John came diving out of the porch, and collared him.

"None of that, sir," said John, "none of that, sir. No breaking of patroles. How dare you come out of the door, sir, without leave? You're trying to get away, sir, are you, and to make a traitor of yourself again? What do you mean, sir?"

"Let me go, father," said Joe imploringly, as he marked the smile upon their visitor's face, and observed the pleasure his disgrace afforded him. "This is too bad. Who wants to get away?"

"Who wants to get away?" cried John, shaking him. "Why you do, sir, you do. You're the boy, sir," added John, collaring with one hand, and aiding the effect of a farewell bow to the visitor with the other, "that wants to

sneak into houses, and stir up differences between noble gentlemen and their sons, are you, eh? Hold your tongue, sir."

Joe made no effort to reply. It was the crowning circumstance of his degradation. He extricated himself from his father's grasp, darted an angry look at the departing guest, and returned into the house.

"But for her," thought Joe, as he threw his arms upon a table in the common room, and laid his head upon them, "but for Dolly, who I couldn't bear should think me the rascal they would make me out to be if I ran away, this house and I should part to-night."

It being evening by this time, Solomon Daisy, Tom Cobb, and Long Parkes were all in the common room too, and had from the window been witnesses of what had just occurred. Mr. Willet, joining them soon afterwards, received the compliments of the company with great composure, and lighting his pipe, sat down among them.

"We'll see, gentlemen," said John after a long pause, "who's the master of this house, and who isn't. We'll see whether boys are to govern men, or men are to govern boys."

"And quite right too," assented Solomon Daisy with some approving nods; "quite right, Johnny. Very good, Johnny. Well said, Mr. Willet. Brayvo, sir."

John slowly brought his eyes to bear upon him, looked at him for a long time, and finally made answer, to the unspeakable consternation of his hearers, "When I want encouragement from you, sir, I'll ask you for it. You let me alone, sir. I can get on without you, I hope. Don't you tackle me, sir, if you please."

"Don't take it ill, Johnny; I didn't mean any harm," pleaded the little man.

"Very good, sir," said John, more than usually obstinate after his late success. "Never mind, sir. I can stand pretty firm of myself, sir, I believe, without being shored up by you." And, having given utterance to this retort, Mr. Willet fixed his eyes upon the boiler, and fell into a kind of tobacco-trance.

The spirits of the company being somewhat damped by this embarrassing line of conduct on the part of their host, nothing more was said for a long time; but at length Mr. Cobb took upon himself to remark, as he rose to knock the ashes out of his pipe, that he hoped Joe would thenceforth learn to obey his father in all things; that he had found, that day, he was not one of the sort of men who were to be trifled with; and that he would recommend him, poetically speaking, to mind his eye for the future.

"I'd recommend you, in return," said Joe, looking up with a flushed face, "not to talk to me."

"Hold your tongue, sir," cried Mr. Willet, suddenly rousing himself, and turning round.

"I won't, father," cried Joe, smiting the table with his fist, so that the jugs and glasses rung again; "these things are hard enough to bear from you; from anybody else I never will endure them any more. Therefore, I say, Mr. Cobb, don't talk to me."

"Why, who are you," said Mr. Cobb sneeringly, "that you are not to be talked to, eh, Joe?"

To which Joe returned no answer, but, with a very ominous shake of the head, resumed his old position, which he would have peacefully preserved until the house shut up at night, but that Mr. Cobb, stimulated by the wonder of the company at the young man's presumption, retorted with sundry taunts, which proved too much for flesh and blood to bear. Crowding into one moment the vexation and the wrath of years, Joe started up, overturned the table, fell upon his long enemy, pummelled him with all his might and main, and finished by driving him with surprising swiftness against a heap of spittoons in one corner; plunging into which, head foremost, with a tremendous crash, he lay at full length among the ruins, stunned and motionless. Then, without waiting to receive the compliments of the bystanders on the victory he had won, he retreated to his own bedchamber, and considering himself in a state of siege, piled all the portable furniture against the door by way of barricade.

"I have done it now," said Joe, as he sat down upon his bedstead and wiped his heated face. "I knew it would come at last. The Maypole and I must part company. I'm a roving vagabond—she hates me for evermore—it's all over!"

#### CHAPTER XXXI.

**F**ONDERING on his unhappy lot, Joe sat and listened for a long time, expecting every moment to hear their creaking footsteps on the stairs, or to be greeted by his worthy father with a summons to capitulate unconditionally, and deliver himself up straightway. But neither voice nor footstep came; and though some distant echoes, as of closing doors and people hurrying in and out of rooms, resounding from time to time through the great

passages, and penetrating to his remote seclusion, gave note of unusual commotion down-stairs, no nearer sound disturbed his place of retreat, which seemed the quieter for these far-off noises, and was as dull and full of gloom as any hermit's cell.

It came on darker and darker. The old-fashioned furniture of the chamber, which was a kind of hospital for all the invalided movables in the house, grew indistinct and shadowy in its many shapes; chairs and tables, which by day were as honest cripples as need be, assumed a doubtful and mysterious character; and one old leprous screen of faded India leather and gold binding, which had kept out many a cold breath of air in days of yore, and shut in many a jolly face, frowned on him with a spectral aspect, and stood at full height in its allotted corner, like some gaunt ghost who waited to be questioned. A portrait opposite the window—a queer, old grey-eyed general, in an oval frame—seemed to wink and doze as the light decayed, and at length, when the last faint glimmering speck of day went out, to shut its eyes in good earnest, and fall sound asleep. There was such a hush and mystery about everything, that Joe could not help following its example; and so went off into a slumber likewise, and dreamed of Dolly, till the clock of Chigwell Church struck two.

Still nobody came. The distant noises in the house had ceased, and out of doors all was quiet too, save for the occasional barking of some deep-mouthed dog, and the shaking of the branches by the night wind. He gazed mournfully out of window at each well-known object as it lay sleeping in the dim light of the moon; and creeping back to his former seat, thought about the late uproar, until, with long thinking of, it seemed to have occurred a month ago. Thus, between dozing, and thinking, and walking to the window and looking out, the night wore away; the grim old screen, and the kindred chairs and tables, began slowly to reveal themselves in their accustomed forms; the grey-eyed general seemed to wink and yawn and rouse himself; and at last he was broad awake again, and very uncomfortable and cold and haggard he looked in the dull grey light of morning.

The sun had begun to peep above the forest trees, and already flung across the curling mist bright bars of gold, when Joe dropped from his window, on the ground below, a little bundle and his trusty stick, and prepared to descend himself.

It was not a very difficult task; for there were so many projections and gable-ends in the way, that they formed a series of clumsy steps, with



no greater obstacle than a jump of some few feet at last. Joe, with his stick and bundle on his shoulder, quickly stood on the firm earth, and looked up at the old Maypole, it might be for the last time.

He didn't apostrophise it, for he was no great scholar. He didn't curse it, for he had little ill-will to give to anything on earth. He felt more affectionate and kind to it than ever he had done in all his life before, so said with all his heart, "God bless you!" as a parting wish, and turned away.

He walked along at a brisk pace, big with great thoughts of going for a soldier, and dying in some foreign country where it was very hot and sandy, and leaving God knows what unheard-of wealth in prize-money to Dolly, who would be very much affected when she came to know of it; and full of such youthful visions, which were sometimes sanguine and sometimes melancholy, but always had her for their main point and centre, pushed on vigorously until the noise of London sounded in his ears, and the Black Lion hove in sight.

It was only eight o'clock then, and very much astonished the Black Lion was to see him come walking in with dust upon his feet at that early hour, with no grey mare to bear him company. But as he ordered breakfast to be got ready with all speed, and, on its being set before him, gave indisputable tokens of a hearty appetite, the Lion received him, as usual, with a hospitable welcome; and treated him with those marks of distinction which, as a regular customer, and one within the freemasonry of the trade, he had a right to claim.

This Lion, or landlord,—for he was called both man and beast, by reason of his having instructed the artist who painted his sign to convey into the features of the lordly brute whose effigy it bore, as near a counterpart of his own face as his skill could compass and devise, was a gentleman almost as quick of apprehension, and of almost as subtle a wit, as the mighty John himself. But the difference between them lay in this: that whereas Mr. Willet's extreme sagacity and acuteness were the efforts of unassisted nature, the Lion stood indebted, in no small amount, to beer; of which he swigged such copious draughts, that most of his faculties were utterly drowned and washed away, except the one great faculty of sleep, which he retained in surprising perfection. The creaking Lion over the house-door was, therefore, to say the truth, rather a drowsy, tame, and feeble lion; and, as these social representatives of a savage class are usually of a conventional character

(being depicted, for the most part, in impossible attitudes and of unearthly colours), he was frequently supposed, by the more ignorant and uninformed among the neighbours, to be the veritable portrait of the host as he appeared on the occasion of some great funeral ceremony or public mourning.

"What noisy fellow is that in the next room?" said Joe, when he had disposed of his breakfast, and had washed and brushed himself.

"A recruiting sergeant," replied the Lion.

Joe started involuntarily. Here was the very thing he had been dreaming of all the way along.

"And I wish," said the Lion, "he was anywhere else but here. The party make noise enough, but they don't call for much. There's great cry there, Mr. Willet, but very little wool. Your father wouldn't like 'em, I know."

Perhaps not much under any circumstances. Perhaps, if he could have known what was passing at that moment in Joe's mind, he would have liked them still less.

"Is he recruiting for a—for a fine regiment?" said Joe, glancing at a little round mirror that hung in the bar.

"I believe he is," replied the host. "It's much the same thing, whatever regiment he's recruiting for. I'm told there an't a deal of difference between a fine man and another one, when they're shot through and through."

"They're not all shot," said Joe.

"No," the Lion answered, "not all. Those that are—supposing it's done easy—are the best off in my opinion."

"Ah!" retorted Joe, "but you don't care for glory."

"For what?" said the Lion.

"Glory."

"No," returned the Lion with supreme indifference. "I don't. You're right in that, Mr. Willet. When Glory comes here, and calls for anything to drink, and changes a guinea to pay for it, I'll give it him for nothing. It's my belief, sir, that the Glory's Arms wouldn't do a very strong business."

These remarks were not at all comforting. Joe walked out, stopped at the door of the next room, and listened. The sergeant was describing a military life. It was all drinking, he said, except that there were frequent intervals of eating and love-making. A battle was the finest thing in the world—when your side won it—and Englishmen always did that. "Supposing you should be killed, sir?" said a timid voice in one corner. "Well, sir, supposing you should be," said the sergeant, "what then? Your

country loves you, sir; his Majesty King George the Third loves you; your memory is honoured, revered, respected; everybody's fond of you, and grateful to you; your name's wrote down at full length in a book in the War Office. Damme, gentlemen, we must all die some time or another, eh?"

The voice coughed, and said no more.

Joe walked into the room. A group of half-dozen fellows had gathered together in the tap-

room, and were listening with greedy ears. One of them, a carter in a smock-frock, seemed wavering and disposed to enlist. The rest, who were by no means disposed, strongly urged him to do so (according to the custom of mankind), backed the sergeant's arguments, and grinned among themselves. "I say nothing, boys," said the sergeant, who sat a little apart drinking his liquor. "For lads of spirit"—here he cast an eye on Joe—"this is the time. I don't want to



"FINISHED BY DRIVING HIM WITH SURPRISING SWIFTNES AGAINST A HEAP OF SPITTOONS IN ONE CORNER."

inveigle you. The king's not come to that, I hope. Brisk young blood is what we want; not milk-and-water. We won't take five men out of six. We want top-sawyers, we do. I'm not a-going to tell tales out of school, but, damme, if every gentleman's son that carries arms in our corps, through being under a cloud and having little differences with his relations, was counted up——" Here his eye fell on Joe again, and so good-naturedly, that Joe beckoned him out. He came directly.

"You're a gentleman, by G—!" was his first remark, as he slapped him on the back. "You're a gentleman in disguise. So am I. Let's swear a friendship."

Joe didn't exactly do that, but he shook hands with him, and thanked him for his good opinion.

"You want to serve," said his new friend. "You shall. You were made for it. You're one of us by nature. What'll you take to drink?"



"Nothing just now," replied Joe, smiling faintly. "I haven't quite made up my mind."

"A mettlesome fellow like you, and not made up his mind!" cried the sergeant. "Here—let me give the bell a pull, and you'll make up your mind in half a minute, I know."

"You're right so far," answered Joe, "for if you pull the bell here, where I'm known, there'll be an end of my soldiering inclinations in no time. Look in my face. You see me, do you?"

"I do," replied the sergeant with an oath, "and a finer young fellow, or one better qualified to serve his king and country, I never set my"—he used an adjective in this place—"eyes on."

"Thank you," said Joe; "I didn't ask you for want of a compliment, but thank you all the same. Do I look like a sneaking fellow or a liar?"

The sergeant rejoined, with many choice asseverations, that he didn't; and that if his (the sergeant's) own father were to say he did, he would run the old gentleman through the body cheerfully, and consider it a meritorious action.

Joe expressed his obligations, and continued, "You can trust me then, and credit what I say. I believe I shall enlist into your regiment to-night. The reason I don't do so now is because I don't want, until to-night, to do what I can't recall. Where shall I find you this evening?"

His friend replied with some unwillingness, and after much ineffectual entreaty having for its object the immediate settlement of the business, that his quarters would be at the Crooked Billet, in Tower Street; where he would be found waking until midnight, and sleeping until breakfast-time to-morrow.

"And if I do come—which it's a million to one I shall—when will you take me out of London?" demanded Joe.

"To-morrow morning, at half after eight o'clock," replied the sergeant. "You'll go abroad—a country where it's all sunshine and plunder—the finest climate in the world."

"To go abroad," said Joe, shaking hands with him, "is the very thing I want. You may expect me."

"You're the kind of lad for us," cried the sergeant, holding Joe's hand in his, in the excess of his admiration. "You're the boy to push your fortune. I don't say it because I bear you any envy, or would take away from the credit of the rise you'll make, but if I had been bred and taught like you, I'd have been a colonel by this time."

"Tush, man!" said Joe; "I'm not so young as that. Needs must when the devil drives;

and the devil that drives me is an empty pocket and an unhappy home. For the present, good-bye."

"For king and country!" cried the sergeant, flourishing his cap.

"For bread and meat!" cried Joe, snapping his fingers. And so they parted.

He had very little money in his pocket; so little, indeed, that after paying for his breakfast (which he was too honest, and perhaps too proud, to score up to his father's charge) he had but a penny left. He had courage, notwithstanding, to resist all the affectionate importunities of the sergeant, who waylaid him at the door with many protestations of eternal friendship, and did in particular request that he would do him the favour to accept of only one shilling as a temporary accommodation. Rejecting his offers both of cash and credit, Joe walked away with stick and bundle as before, bent upon getting through the day as he best could, and going down to the locksmith's in the dusk of the evening; for it should go hard, he had resolved, but he would have a parting word with charming Dolly Varden.

He went out by Islington, and so on to Highgate, and sat on many stones and gates, but there were no voices in the bells to bid him turn. Since the time of noble Whittington, fair flower of merchants, bells have come to have less sympathy with humankind. They only ring for money and on state occasions. Wanderers have increased in number; ships leave the Thames for distant regions, carrying from stem to stern no other cargo; the bells are silent; they ring out no entreaties or regrets; they are used to it, and have grown worldly.

Joe bought a roll, and reduced his purse to the condition (with a difference) of that celebrated purse of Fortunatus, which, whatever were its favoured owner's necessities, had one unvarying amount in it. In these real times, when all the Fairies are dead and buried, there are still a great many purses which possess that quality. The sum-total they contain is expressed in arithmetic by a circle, and whether it be added to or multiplied by its own amount, the result of the problem is more easily stated than any known in figures.

Evening drew on at last. With the desolate and solitary feeling of one who had no home or shelter, and was alone utterly in the world for the first time, he bent his steps towards the locksmith's house. He had delayed till now, knowing that Mrs. Varden sometimes went out alone, or with Miggs for her sole attendant, to lectures in the evening; and devoutly hoping

that this might be one of her nights of moral culture.

He had walked up and down before the house, on the opposite side of the way, two or three times, when, as he returned to it again, he caught a glimpse of a fluttering skirt at the door. It was Dolly's. To whom else could it belong? No dress but hers had such a flow as that. He plucked up his spirits, and followed it into the workshop of the Golden Key.

His darkening the door caused her to look round. Oh that face! "If it hadn't been for that," thought Joe, "I should never have walked into poor Tom Cobb. She's twenty times handsomer than ever. She might marry a Lord!"

He didn't say this. He only thought it—perhaps looked it also. Dolly was glad to see him, and was so sorry her father and mother were away from home. Joe begged she wouldn't mention it on any account.

Dolly hesitated to lead the way into the parlour, for there it was nearly dark; at the same time, she hesitated to stand talking in the workshop, which was yet light and open to the street. They had got by some means, too, before the little forge; and Joe having her hand in his (which he had no right to have, for Dolly only gave it him to shake), it was so like standing before some homely altar being married, that it was the most embarrassing state of things in the world.

"I have come," said Joe, "to say good-bye—to say good-bye for I don't know how many years; perhaps for ever. I am going abroad."

Now this was exactly what he should not have said. Here he was, talking like a gentleman at large who was free to come and go and roam about the world at his pleasure, when that gallant coachmaker had vowed, but the night before, that Miss Varden held him bound in adamant chains; and had positively stated in so many words that she was killing him by inches, and that in a fortnight more, or thereabouts, he expected to make a decent end, and leave the business to his mother.

Dolly released her hand and said "Indeed!" She remarked in the same breath that it was a fine night, and, in short, betrayed no more emotion than the forge itself.

"I couldn't go," said Joe, "without coming to see you. I hadn't the heart to."

Dolly was more sorry than she could tell, that he should have taken so much trouble. It was such a long way, and he must have such a deal to do. And how *was* Mr. Willet—that dear old gentleman—

"Is this all you say?" cried Joe.

All! Good gracious, what did the man expect? She was obliged to take her apron in her hand, and run her eyes along the hem from corner to corner, to keep herself from laughing in his face; not because his gaze confused her—not at all.

Joe had small experience in love affairs, and had no notion how different young ladies are at different times; he had expected to take Dolly up again at the very point where he had left her after that delicious evening ride, and was no more prepared for such an alteration than to see the sun and moon change places. He had buoyed himself up all day with an indistinct idea that she would certainly say "Don't go," or "Don't leave us," or "Why do you go?" or "Why do you leave us?" or would give him some little encouragement of that sort; he had even entertained the possibility of her bursting into tears, of her throwing herself into his arms, of her falling down in a fainting fit without previous word or sign; but any approach to such a line of conduct as this had been so far from his thoughts, that he could only look at her in silent wonder.

Dolly in the meanwhile turned to the corners of her apron, and measured the sides, and smoothed out the wrinkles, and was as silent as he. At last, after a long pause, Joe said good-bye. "Good-bye," said Dolly, with as pleasant a smile as if he were going into the next street, and were coming back to supper; "good-bye."

"Come," said Joe, putting out both his hands, "Dolly, dear Dolly, don't let us part like this. I love you dearly, with all my heart and soul; with as much truth and earnestness as ever man loved woman in this world, I do believe. I am a poor fellow, as you know—poorer now than ever, for I have fled from home, not being able to bear it any longer, and must fight my own way without help. You are beautiful, admired, are loved by everybody, are well off and happy; and may you ever be so! Heaven forbid I should ever make you otherwise; but give me a word of comfort. Say something kind to me. I have no right to expect it of you, I know, but I ask it because I love you, and shall treasure the slightest word from you all through my life. Dolly, dearest, have you nothing to say to me?"

No. Nothing. Dolly was a coquette by nature, and a spoiled child. She had no notion of being carried by storm in this way. The coachmaker would have been dissolved in tears, and would have knelt down, and called himself names, and clasped his hands, and beat his breast, and tugged wildly at his cravat, and done all kinds of poetry. Joe had no business



to be going abroad. He had no right to be able to do it. If he was in adamantine chains, he couldn't.

"I have said good-bye," said Dolly, "twice. Take your arm away directly, Mr. Joseph, or I'll call Miggs."

"I'll not reproach you," answered Joe; "it's my fault, no doubt. I have thought sometimes that you didn't quite despise me, but I was a fool to think so. Every one must who has seen the life I have led—you most of all. God bless you!"

He was gone, actually gone. Dolly waited a little while, thinking he would return, peeped out at the door, looked up the street and down as well as the increasing darkness would allow, came in again, waited a little longer, went upstairs humming a tune, bolted herself in, laid her head down on her bed, and cried as if her heart would break. And yet such natures are made up of so many contradictions, that if Joe Willet had come back that night, next day, next week, next month, the odds are a hundred to one she would have treated him in the very same manner, and have wept for it afterwards with the very same distress.

She had no sooner left the workshop than there cautiously peered out, from behind the chimney of the forge, a face which had already emerged from the same concealment twice or thrice unseen, and which, after satisfying itself that it was now alone, was followed by a leg; a shoulder, and so on by degrees, until the form of Mr. Tappertit stood confessed, with a brown-paper cap stuck negligently on one side of its head, and its arms very much a-kinbo.

"Have my ears deceived me," said the 'Prentice, "or do I dream? Am I to thank thee, Fortun', or to cus thee—which?"

He gravely descended from his elevation, took down his piece of looking-glass, planted it against the wall upon the usual bench, twisted his head round, and looked closely at his legs.

"If they're a dream," said Sim, "let sculptures have such wisions, and chisel 'em out when they wake. This is reality. Sleep has no such limbs as them. Tremble, Willet, and despair. She's mine! She's mine!"

With these triumphant expressions, he seized a hammer and dealt a heavy blow at a vice, which in his mind's eye represented the sconce or head of Joseph Willet. That done, he burst into a peal of laughter which startled Miss Miggs even in her distant kitchen, and dipping his head into a bowl of water, had recourse to a jack-towel inside the closet door, which served the double purpose of smothering his feelings and drying his face.

Joe, disconsolate and down-hearted, but full of courage too, on leaving the locksmith's house, made the best of his way to the Crooked Billet, and there inquired for his friend the sergeant, who, expecting no man less, received him with open arms. In the course of five minutes after his arrival at that house of entertainment, he was enrolled among the gallant defenders of his native land; and within half an hour was regaled with a steaming supper of boiled tripe and onions, prepared, as his friend assured him more than once, at the express command of his most Sacred Majesty the King. To this meal, which tasted very savoury after his long fasting, he did ample justice; and when he had followed it up, or down, with a variety of loyal and patriotic toasts, he was conducted to a straw mattress in a loft over the stable, and locked in there for the night.

The next morning, he found that the obliging care of his martial friend had decorated his hat with sundry party-coloured streamers, which made a very lively appearance; and in company with that officer, and three other military gentlemen newly enrolled, who were under a cloud so dense that it only left three shoes, a boot, and a coat and a half visible among them, repaired to the river-side. Here they were joined by a corporal and four more heroes, of whom two were drunk and daring, and two sober and penitent, but each of whom, like Joe, had his dusty stick and bundle. The party embarked in a passage-boat bound for Gravesend, whence they were to proceed on foot to Chatham; the wind was in their favour, and they soon left London behind them, a mere dark mist—a giant phantom in the air.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

**M**ISFORTUNES, saith the adage, never come singly. There is little doubt that troubles are exceedingly gregarious in their nature, and flying in flocks, are apt to perch capriciously; crowding on the heads of some poor wights until there is not an inch of room left on their unlucky crowns, and taking no more notice of others, who offer as good resting-places for the soles of their feet, than if they had no existence. It may have happened that a flight of troubles brooding over London, and looking out for Joseph Willet, whom they couldn't find, darted down haphazard on the first young man that caught their fancy, and settled on him instead. However

this may be, certain it is that on the very day of Joe's departure they swarmed about the ears of Edward Chester, and did so buzz and flap their wings, and persecute him, that he was most profoundly wretched.

It was evening, and just eight o'clock, when

he and his father, having wine and dessert set before them, were left to themselves for the first time that day. They had dined together, but a third person had been present during the meal, and until they met at table they had not seen each other since the previous night.



"IF THEY'RE A DREAM," SAID SIM, "LET SCULPTURES HAVE SUCH WISONS, AND CHISEL 'EM OUT WHEN THEY WAKE. THIS IS REALITY. SLEEP HAS NO SUCH LIMBS AS THEM."

Edward was reserved and silent, Mr. Chester was more than usually gay; but not caring, as it seemed, to open a conversation with one whose humour was so different, he vented the lightness of his spirit in smiles and sparkling looks, and made no effort to awaken his atten-

tion. So they remained for some time: the father lying on a sofa with his accustomed air of graceful negligence; the son seated opposite to him with downcast eyes, busied, it was plain, with painful and uneasy thoughts.

"My dear Edward," said Mr. Chester at



length, with a most engaging laugh, "do not extend your drowsy influence to the decanter. Suffer *that* to circulate, let your spirits be never so stagnant."

Edward begged his pardon, passed it, and relapsed into his former state.

"You do wrong not to fill your glass," said Mr. Chester, holding up his own before the light. "Wine in moderation—not in excess, for that makes men ugly—has a thousand pleasant influences. It brightens the eye, improves the voice, imparts a new vivacity to one's thoughts and conversation: you should try it, Ned."

"Ah, father!" cried his son, "if——"

"My good fellow," interposed the parent hastily, as he set down his glass, and raised his eyebrows with a startled and horrified expression, "for heaven's sake don't call me by that obsolete and ancient name. Have some regard for delicacy. Am I grey, or wrinkled, do I go on crutches, have I lost my teeth, that you adopt such a mode of address? Good God, how very coarse!"

"I was about to speak to you from my heart, sir," returned Edward, "in the confidence which should subsist between us; and you check me in the outset."

"Now *do*, Ned, *do not*," said Mr. Chester, raising his delicate hand imploringly, "talk in that monstrous manner. About to speak from your heart! Don't you know that the heart is an ingenious part of our formation—the centre of the blood-vessels and all that sort of thing—which has no more to do with what you say or think than your knees have? How can you be so very vulgar and absurd? These anatomical allusions should be left to gentlemen of the medical profession. They are really not agreeable in society. You quite surprise me, Ned."

"Well! there are no such things to wound, or heal, or have regard for. I know your creed, sir, and will say no more," returned his son.

"There again," said Mr. Chester, sipping his wine, "you are wrong. I distinctly say there are such things. We know there are. The hearts of animals—of bullocks, sheep, and so forth—are cooked and devoured, as I am told, by the lower classes, with a vast deal of relish. Men are sometimes stabbed to the heart, shot to the heart; but as to speaking from the heart, or to the heart, or being warm-hearted, or cold-hearted, or broken-hearted, or being all heart, or having no heart—pah! these things are nonsense, Ned."

"No doubt, sir," returned his son, seeing that he paused for him to speak. "No doubt."

"There's Haredale's niece, your late flame," said Mr. Chester, as a careless illustration of his

meaning. "No doubt in your mind she was all heart once. Now she has none at all. Yet she is the same person, Ned, exactly."

"She is a changed person, sir," cried Edward, reddening; "and changed by vile means, I believe."

"You have had a cool dismissal, have you?" said his father. "Poor Ned! I told you last night what would happen.—May I ask you for the nut-crackers?"

"She has been tampered with, and most treacherously deceived," cried Edward, rising from his seat. "I never will believe that the knowledge of my real position, given her by myself, has worked this change. I know she is beset and tortured. But though our contract is at an end, and broken past all redemption; though I charge upon her want of firmness and want of truth, both to herself and me; I do not now, and never will believe that any sordid motive, or her own unbiassed will, has led her to this course—never!"

"You make me blush," returned his father gaily, "for the folly of your nature, in which—but we never know ourselves—I devoutly hope there is no reflection of my own. With regard to the young lady herself, she has done what is very natural and proper, my dear fellow; what you yourself proposed, as I learn from Haredale; and what I predicted—with no great exercise of sagacity—she would do. She supposed you to be rich, or at least quite rich enough; and found you poor. Marriage is a civil contract; people marry to better their worldly condition and improve appearances; it is an affair of house and furniture, of liveries, servants, equipage, and so forth. The lady being poor, and you poor also, there is an end of the matter. You cannot enter upon these considerations, and have no manner of business with the ceremony. I drink her health in this glass, and respect and honour her for her extreme good sense. It is a lesson to you. Fill yours, Ned."

"It is a lesson," returned his son, "by which I hope I may never profit, and if years and their experience impress it on——"

"Don't say on the heart," interposed his father.

"On men whom the world and its hypocrisy have spoiled," said Edward warmly, "Heaven keep me from its knowledge."

"Come, sir," returned his father, raising himself a little on the sofa, and looking straight towards him; "we have had enough of this. Remember, if you please, your interest, your duty, your moral obligations, your filial affections, and all that sort of thing, which it is so

very delightful and charming to reflect upon ; or you will repent it."

"I shall never repent the preservation of my self-respect, sir," said Edward. "Forgive me if I say that I will not sacrifice it at your bidding, and that I will not pursue the track which you would have me take, and to which the secret share you have had in this late separation tends."

His father rose a little higher still, and looking at him as though curious to know if he were quite resolved and earnest, dropped gently down again, and said in the calmest voice—eating his nuts meanwhile—

"Edward, my father had a son who, being a fool like you, and, like you, entertaining low and disobedient sentiments, he disinherited and cursed one morning after breakfast. The circumstance occurs to me with a singular clearness of recollection this evening. I remember eating muffins at the time, with marmalade. He led a miserable life (the son, I mean), and died early ; it was a happy release on all accounts ; he degraded the family very much. It is a sad circumstance, Edward, when a father finds it necessary to resort to such strong measures."

"It is," replied Edward, "and it is sad when a son, proffering him his love and duty in their best and truest sense, finds himself repelled at every turn, and forced to disobey. Dear father," he added more earnestly, though in a gentler tone, "I have reflected many times on what occurred between us when we first discussed this subject. Let there be a confidence between us ; not in terms, but truth. Hear what I have to say."

"As I anticipate what it is, and cannot fail to do so, Edward," returned his father coldly, "I decline. I couldn't possibly. I am sure it would put me out of temper, which is a state of mind I can't endure. If you intend to mar my plans for your establishment in life, and the preservation of that gentility and becoming pride which our family have so long sustained—if, in short, you are resolved to take your own course, you must take it, and my curse with it. I am very sorry, but there's really no alternative."

"The curse may pass your lips," said Edward, "but it will be but empty breath. I do not believe that any man on earth has greater power to call one down upon his fellow—least of all upon his own child—than he has to make one drop of rain or flake of snow fall from the clouds above us at his impious bidding. Beware, sir, what you do."

"You are so very irreligious, so exceedingly undutiful, so horribly profane," rejoined his father, turning his face lazily towards him, and

cracking another nut, "that I positively must interrupt you here. It is quite impossible we can continue to go on upon such terms as these. If you will do me the favour to ring the bell, the servant will show you to the door. Return to this roof no more, I beg you. Go, sir, since you have no moral sense remaining ; and go to the Devil, at my express desire. Good day."

Edward left the room without another word or look, and turned his back upon the house for ever.

The father's face was slightly flushed and heated, but his manner was quite unchanged, as he rang the bell again, and addressed his servant on his entrance.

"Peak—if that gentleman who has just gone out—"

"I beg your pardon, sir, Mr. Edward ?"

"Were there more than one, dolt, that you ask the question?—If that gentleman should send here for his wardrobe, let him have it, do you hear? If he should call himself at any time, I'm not at home. You'll tell him so, and shut the door."

So, it soon got whispered about that Mr. Chester was very unfortunate in his son, who had occasioned him great grief and sorrow. And the good people who heard this, and told it again, marvelled the more at his equanimity and even temper, and said what an amiable nature that man must have, who, having undergone so much, could be so placid and so calm. And when Edward's name was spoken, Society shook its head and laid its finger on its lip, and sighed, and looked very grave ; and those who had sons about his age waxed wrathful and indignant, and hoped, for Virtue's sake, that he was dead. And the world went on turning round, as usual, for five years, concerning which this Narrative is silent.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.



ONE wintry evening, early in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty, a keen north wind arose as it grew dark, and night came on with black and dismal looks. A bitter storm of sleet, sharp, dense, and icy-cold, swept the wet streets, and rattled on the trembling windows. Sign-boards, shaken past endurance in their creaking frames, fell crashing on the pavement ; old tottering chimneys reeled and



staggered in the blast; and many a steeple rocked again that night, as though the earth were troubled.

It was not a time for those who could by any means get light and warmth to brave the fury of the weather. In coffee-houses of the better sort, guests crowded round the fire, forgot to be political, and told each other with a secret gladness that the blast grew fiercer every minute. Each humble tavern by the water-side had its group of uncouth figures round the hearth; who talked of vessels foundering at sea, and all hands lost, related many a dismal tale of shipwreck and drowned men, and hoped that some they knew were safe, and shook their heads in doubt. In private dwellings children clustered near the blaze; listening with timid pleasure to tales of ghosts and goblins and tall figures clad in white standing by bedsides, and people who had gone to sleep in old churches, and being overlooked, had found themselves alone there at the dead hour of the night: until they shuddered at the thought of the dark rooms up-stairs, yet loved to hear the wind moan too, and hoped it would continue bravely. From time to time these happy indoor people stopped to listen, or one held up his finger and cried "Hark!" and then, above the rumbling in the chimney and the fast pattering on the glass, was heard a wailing, rushing sound, which shook the walls as though a giant's hand were on them; then a hoarse roar as if the sea had risen; then such a whirl and tumult that the air seemed mad; and then, with a lengthened howl, the waves of wind swept on, and left a moment's interval of rest.

Cheerily, though there were none abroad to see it, shone the Maypole light that evening. Blessings on the red—deep ruby, glowing red—old curtain of the window; blending into one rich stream of brightness fire and candle, meat, drink, and company, and gleaming like a jovial eye upon the bleak waste out of doors! Within, what carpet like its crunching sand, what music merry as its crackling logs, what perfume like its kitchen's dainty breath, what weather genial as its hearty warmth? Blessings on the old house, how sturdily it stood! How did the vexed wind chafe and roar about its stalwart roof; how did it pant and strive with its wide chimneys, which still poured forth, from their hospitable throats, great clouds of smoke, and puffed defiance in its face; how, above all, did it drive and rattle at the casement, emulous to extinguish that cheerful glow, which would not be put down, and seemed the brighter for the conflict!

The profusion too, the rich and lavish bounty,

of that goodly tavern! It was not enough that one fire roared and sparkled on its spacious hearth; in the tiles which paved and compassed it, five hundred flickering fires burnt brightly also. It was not enough that one red curtain shut the wild night out, and shed its cheerful influence on the room. In every saucepan lid, and candlestick, and vessel of copper, brass, or tin that hung upon the walls, were countless ruddy hangings, flashing and gleaming with every motion of the blaze, and offering, let the eye wander where it might, interminable vistas of the same rich colour. The old oak wainscoting, the beams, the chairs, the seats, reflected it in a deep, dull glimmer. There were fires and red curtains in the very eyes of the drinkers, in their buttons, in their liquor, in the pipes they smoked.

Mr. Willet sat in what had been his accustomed place five years before, with his eyes on the eternal boiler; and had sat there since the clock struck eight, giving no other signs of life than breathing with a loud and constant snore (though he was wide awake), and from time to time putting his glass to his lips, or knocking the ashes out of his pipe, and filling it anew. It was now half-past ten. Mr. Cobb and long Phil Parkes were his companions, as of old, and for two mortal hours and a half none of the company had pronounced one word.

Whether people, by dint of sitting together in the same place and the same relative positions, and doing exactly the same things for a great many years, acquire a sixth sense, or some unknown power of influencing each other which serves them in its stead, is a question for philosophy to settle. But certain it is that old John Willet, Mr. Parkes, and Mr. Cobb were one and all firmly of opinion that they were very jolly companions—rather choice spirits than otherwise; that they looked at each other every now and then as if there were a perpetual interchange of ideas going on among them; that no man considered himself or his neighbour by any means silent; and that each of them nodded occasionally when he caught the eye of another, as if he would say, "You have expressed yourself extremely well, sir, in relation to that sentiment, and I quite agree with you."

The room was so very warm, the tobacco so very good, and the fire so very soothing, that Mr. Willet by degrees began to doze; but as he had perfectly acquired, by dint of long habit, the art of smoking in his sleep, and as his breathing was pretty much the same, awake or asleep, saving that in the latter case he sometimes experienced a slight difficulty in respiration (such as a carpenter meets with when he is planing and

comes to a knot), neither of his companions was aware of the circumstance until he met with one of these impediments, and was obliged to try again.

"Johnny's dropped off," said Mr. Parkes in a whisper.

"Fast as a top," said Mr. Cobb.

Neither of them said any more until Mr. Willet came to another knot—one of surpassing obduracy—which bade fair to throw him into convulsions, but which he got over at last without waking, by an effort quite superhuman.

"He sleeps uncommon hard," said Mr. Cobb.

Mr. Parkes, who was possibly a hard sleeper himself, replied with some disdain, "Not a bit on it;" and directed his eyes towards a hand-bill pasted over the chimney-piece, which was decorated at the top with a woodcut representing a youth of tender years running away very fast, with a bundle over his shoulder at the end of a stick, and—to carry out the idea—a finger-post and a milestone beside him. Mr. Cobb likewise turned his eyes in the same direction, and surveyed the placard as if that were the first time he had ever beheld it. Now this was a document which Mr. Willet had himself indited on the disappearance of his son Joseph, acquainting the nobility and gentry and the public in general with the circumstances of his having left his home; describing his dress and appearance; and offering a reward of five pounds to any person or persons who would pack him up and return him safely to the Maypole at Chigwell, or lodge him in any of his Majesty's gaols until such time as his father should come and claim him. In this advertisement Mr. Willet had obstinately persisted, despite the advice and entreaties of his friends, in describing his son as a "young boy;" and furthermore as being from eighteen inches to a couple of feet shorter than he really was; two circumstances which perhaps accounted, in some degree, for its never having been productive of any other effect than the transmission to Chigwell at various times, and at a vast expense, of some five-and-forty run-aways varying from six years old to twelve.

Mr. Cobb and Mr. Parkes looked mysteriously at this composition, at each other, and at old John. From the time he had pasted it up with his own hands, Mr. Willet had never by word or sign alluded to the subject, or encouraged any one else to do so. Nobody had the least notion what his thoughts or opinions were connected with it; whether he remembered it or forgot it; whether he had any idea that such an event had ever taken place. Therefore, even while he

slept, no one ventured to refer to it in his presence; and, for such sufficient reasons, these his chosen friends were silent now.

Mr. Willet had got by this time into such a complication of knots, that it was perfectly clear he must wake or die. He chose the former alternative, and opened his eyes.

"If he don't come in five minutes," said John, "I shall have supper without him."

The antecedent of this pronoun had been mentioned for the last time at eight o'clock. Messrs. Parkes and Cobb, being used to this style of conversation, replied without difficulty that to be sure Solomon was very late, and they wondered what had happened to detain him.

"He an't blown away, I suppose," said Parkes. "It's enough to carry a man of his figure off his legs, and easy too. Do you hear it? It blows great guns, indeed. There'll be many a crash in the Forest to-night, I reckon, and many a broken branch upon the ground to-morrow."

"It won't break anything in the Maypole, I take it, sir," returned old John. "Let it try. I give it leave. What's that?"

"The wind," cried Parkes. "It's howling like a Christian, and has been all night long."

"Did you ever, sir," asked John, after a minute's contemplation, "hear the wind say, 'Maypole?'"

"Why, what man ever did?" said Parkes.

"Nor 'ahoy,' perhaps?" added John.

"No. Nor that neither."

"Very good, sir," said Mr. Willet, perfectly unmoved; "then if that was the wind just now, and you'll wait a little time without speaking, you'll hear it say both words very plain."

Mr. Willet was right. After listening for a few moments, they could clearly hear, above the roar and tumult out of doors, this shout repeated; and that with a shrillness and energy which denoted that it came from some person in great distress or terror. They looked at each other, turned pale, and held their breath. No man stirred.

It was in this emergency that Mr. Willet displayed something of that strength of mind and plenitude of mental resource which rendered him the admiration of all his friends and neighbours. After looking at Messrs. Parkes and Cobb for some time in silence, he clapped his two hands to his cheeks, and sent forth a roar which made the glasses dance and rafters ring—a long-sustained, discordant bellow, that rolled onward with the wind, and startling every echo, made the night a hundred times more boisterous—a deep, loud, dismal bray, that sounded like a human gong. Then, with every vein in his



head and face swollen with the great exertion, and his countenance suffused with a lively purple, he drew a little nearer to the fire, and turning his back upon it, said with dignity :

"If that's any comfort to anybody, they're welcome to it. If it an't, I'm sorry for 'em. If either of you two gentlemen likes to go out and see what's the matter, you can. I'm not curious myself."

While he spoke the cry drew nearer and nearer, footsteps passed the window, the latch of the door was raised, it opened, was violently shut again, and Solomon Daisy, with a lighted lantern in his hand, and the rain streaming from his disordered dress, dashed into the room.

A more complete picture of terror than the little man presented, it would be difficult to imagine. The perspiration stood in beads upon his face, his knees knocked together, his every limb trembled, the power of articulation was quite gone; and there he stood, panting for breath, gazing on them with such livid ashy looks, that they were infected with his fear, though ignorant of its occasion, and reflecting his dismayed and horror-stricken visage, stared back again without venturing to question him; until old John Willet, in a fit of temporary insanity, made a dive at his cravat, and, seizing him by that portion of his dress, shook him to and fro until his very teeth appeared to rattle in his head.

"Tell us what's the matter, sir," said John, "or I'll kill you. Tell us what's the matter, sir, or in another second I'll have your head under the biler. How dare you look like that? Is anybody a following of you? What do you mean? Say something, or I'll be the death of you, I will."

Mr. Willet, in his frenzy, was so near keeping his word to the very letter (Solomon Daisy's eyes already beginning to roll in an alarming manner, and certain guttural sounds, as of a choking man, to issue from his throat), that the two bystanders, recovering in some degree, plucked him off his victim by main force, and placed the little clerk of Chigwell in a chair. Directing a fearful gaze all round the room, he implored them in a faint voice to give him some drink; and above all to lock the house-door, and close and bar the shutters of the room without a moment's loss of time. The latter request did not tend to reassure his hearers, or to fill them with the most comfortable sensations; they complied with it, however, with the greatest expedition; and having handed him a bumper of brandy-and-water, nearly boiling hot, waited to hear what he might have to tell them.

"Oh, Johnny!" said Solomon, shaking him

by the hand. "Oh, Parkes! Oh, Tommy Cobb! Why did I leave this house to-night? On the nineteenth of March—of all nights in the year, on the nineteenth of March!"

They all drew closer to the fire. Parkes, who was nearest to the door, started and looked over his shoulder. Mr. Willet, with great indignation, inquired what the devil he meant by that—and then said, "God forgive me," and glanced over his own shoulder, and came a little nearer.

"When I left here to-night," said Solomon Daisy, "I little thought what day of the month it was. I have never gone alone into the church after dark on this day for seven-and-twenty years. I have heard it said that as we keep our birthdays when we are alive, so the ghosts of dead people, who are not easy in their graves, keep the day they died upon.—How the wind roars!"

Nobody spoke. All eyes were fastened on Solomon.

"I might have known," he said, "what night it was by the foul weather. There's no such night in the whole year round as this is always. I never sleep quietly in my bed on the nineteenth of March."

"Go on," said Tom Cobb in a low voice. "Nor I neither."

Solomon Daisy raised his glass to his lips; put it down upon the floor with such a trembling hand that the spoon tinkled in it like a little bell; and continued thus:

"Have I ever said that we are always brought back to this subject in some strange way when the nineteenth of this month comes round? Do you suppose it was by accident I forgot to wind up the church clock? I never forgot it at any other time, though it's such a clumsy thing that it has to be wound up every day. Why should it escape my memory on this day of all others?"

"I made as much haste down there as I could when I went from here, but I had to go home first for the keys; and the wind and rain being dead against me all the way, it was pretty well as much as I could do at times to keep my legs. I got there at last, opened the church-door, and went in. I had not met a soul all the way, and you may judge whether it was dull or not. Neither of you would bear me company. If you could have known what was to come, you'd have been in the right."

"The wind was so strong, that it was as much as I could do to shut the church-door by putting my whole weight against it; and even as it was, it burst wide open twice, with such strength that any of you would have sworn, if you had been

leaning against it, as I was, that somebody was pushing on the other side. However, I got the key turned, went into the belfry, and wound up the clock—which was very near run down, and would have stood stock-still in half an hour.

“As I took up my lantern again to leave the church, it came upon me all at once that this was the nineteenth of March. It came upon me with a kind of shock, as if a hand had struck the thought upon my forehead; at the very same moment, I heard a voice outside the tower—rising from among the graves.”

Here old John precipitately interrupted the speaker, and begged that if Mr. Parkes (who was seated opposite to him, and was staring directly over his head) saw anything, he would have the goodness to mention it. Mr. Parkes apologised, and remarked that he was only listening; to which Mr. Willet angrily retorted, that his listening with that kind of expression in his face was not agreeable, and that, if he couldn't look like other people, he had better put his pocket-handkerchief over his head. Mr. Parkes with great submission pledged himself to do so, if again required, and John Willet, turning to Solomon, desired him to proceed. After waiting until a violent gust of wind and rain, which seemed to shake even that sturdy house to its foundation, had passed away, the little man complied:

“Never tell me that it was my fancy, or that it was any other sound which I mistook for that I tell you of. I heard the wind whistle through the arches of the church. I heard the steeple strain and creak. I heard the rain as it came driving against the walls. I felt the bells shake. I saw the ropes sway to and fro. And I heard that voice.”

“What did it say?” asked Tom Cobb.

“I don't know what; I don't know that it spoke. It gave a kind of cry, as any one of us might do if something dreadful followed us in a dream, and came upon us unawares; and then it died off: seeming to pass quite round the church.”

“I don't see much in that,” said John, drawing a long breath, and looking round him like a man who felt relieved.

“Perhaps not,” returned his friend, “but that's not all.”

“What more do you mean to say, sir, is to come?” asked John, pausing in the act of wiping his face upon his apron. “What are you a-going to tell us of next?”

“What I saw.”

“Saw!” echoed all three, bending forward.

“When I opened the church-door to come out,” said the little man, with an expression of face which bore ample testimony to the sincerity

of his conviction, “when I opened the church-door to come out, which I did suddenly, for I wanted to get it shut again before another gust of wind came up, there crossed me—so close, that by stretching out my finger, I could have touched it—something in the likeness of a man. It was bareheaded to the storm. It turned its face without stopping, and fixed its eyes on mine. It was a ghost—a spirit.”

“Whose?” they all three cried together.

In the excess of his emotion (for he fell back trembling in his chair, and waved his hand as if entreating them to question him no further), his answer was lost on all but old John Willet, who happened to be seated close beside him.

“Who?” cried Parkes and Tom Cobb, looking eagerly by turns at Solomon Daisy and at Mr. Willet. “Who was it?”

A profound silence ensued.

“Gentlemen,” said Mr. Willet after a long pause, “you needn't ask. The likeness of a murdered man. This is the nineteenth of March.”

“If you'll take my advice,” said John, “we had better, one and all, keep this a secret. Such tales would not be liked at the Warren. Let us keep it to ourselves for the present time at all events, or we may get into trouble, and Solomon may lose his place. Whether it was really as he says, or whether it wasn't, is no matter. Right or wrong, nobody would believe him. As to the probabilities, I don't myself think,” said Mr. Willet, eyeing the corners of the room in a manner which showed that, like some other philosophers, he was not quite easy in his theory, “that a ghost as had been a man of sense in his lifetime would be out a walking in such weather—I only know that I wouldn't, if I was one.”

But this heretical doctrine was strongly opposed by the other three, who quoted a great many precedents to show that bad weather was the very time for such appearances; and Mr. Parkes (who had had a ghost in his family, by the mother's side) argued the matter with so much ingenuity and force of illustration, that John was only saved from having to retract his opinion by the opportune appearance of supper, to which they applied themselves with a dreadful relish. Even Solomon Daisy himself, by dint of the elevating influences of fire, lights, brandy, and good company, so far recovered as to handle his knife and fork in a highly creditable manner, and to display a capacity both of eating and drinking such as banished all fear of his having sustained any lasting injury from his fright.

Supper done, they crowded round the fire again, and, as is common on such occasions,



propounded all manner of leading questions calculated to surround the story with new horrors and surprises. But Solomon Daisy, notwithstanding these temptations, adhered so steadily to his original account, and repeated it so often, with such slight variations, and with such solemn asseverations of its truth and reality, that his hearers were (with good reason) more astonished than at first. As he took John Willet's view of the matter in regard to the propriety of not bruiting the tale abroad, unless the spirit should appear to him again, in which case it would be necessary to take immediate counsel with the clergyman, it was solemnly resolved that it should be hushed up and kept quiet. And as most men like to have a secret to tell which may exalt their own importance, they arrived at this conclusion with perfect unanimity.

As it was by this time growing late, and was long past their usual hour of separating, the cronies parted for the night. Solomon Daisy, with a fresh candle in his lantern, repaired home-wards under the escort of long Phil Parkes and Mr. Cobb, who were rather more nervous than himself. Mr. Willet, after seeing them to the door, returned to collect his thoughts with the assistance of the boiler, and to listen to the storm of wind and rain, which had not yet abated one jot of its fury.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

**B**EFORE old John had looked at the boiler quite twenty minutes, he got his ideas into a focus, and brought them to bear upon Solomon Daisy's story. The more he thought of it, the more impressed he became with a sense of his own wisdom, and a desire that Mr. Haredale should be impressed with it likewise. At length, to the end that he might sustain a principal and important character in the affair; and might have the start of Solomon and his two friends, through whose means he knew the adventure, with a variety of exaggerations, would be known to at least a score of people, and most likely to Mr. Haredale himself, by breakfast-time to-morrow; he determined to repair to the Warren before going to bed.

"He's my landlord," thought John, as he took a candle in his hand, and setting it down in a corner out of the wind's way, opened a case-ment in the rear of the house, looking towards the stables. "We haven't met of late years so often as we used to do—changes are taking place in the family—it's desirable that I should

stand as well with them, in point of dignity, as possible—the whispering about of this here tale will anger him—it's good to have confidences with a gentleman of his natur', and set one's self right besides. Halloa there! Hugh—Hugh! Hal-loa!"

When he had repeated this shout a dozen times, and startled every pigeon from its slumbers, a door in one of the ruinous old buildings opened, and a rough voice demanded what was amiss now, that a man couldn't even have his sleep in quiet.

"What! Haven't you sleep enough, growler, that you're not to be knocked up for once?" said John.

"No," replied the voice, as the speaker yawned and shook himself. "Not half enough."

"I don't know how you *can* sleep, with the wind a bellowsing and roaring about you, making the tiles fly like a pack of cards," said John; "but no matter for that. Wrap yourself up in something or another, and come here, for you must go as far as the Warren with me. And look sharp about it."

Hugh, with much low growling and muttering, went back into his lair; and presently reappeared, carrying a lantern and a cudgel, and enveloped from head to foot in an old, frouzy, slouching horse-cloth. Mr. Willet received this figure at the back-door, and ushered him into the bar, while he wrapped himself in sundry great-coats and capes, and so tied and knotted his face in shawls and handkerchiefs, that how he breathed was a mystery.

"You don't take a man out of doors at near midnight in such weather, without putting some heart into him, do you, master?" said Hugh.

"Yes, I do, sir," returned Mr. Willet. "I put the heart (as you call it) into him when he has brought me safe home again, and his standing steady on his legs an't of so much consequence. So hold that light up, if you please, and go on a step or two before to show the way."

Hugh obeyed with a very indifferent grace, and a longing glance at the bottles. Old John, laying strict injunctions on his cook to keep the doors locked in his absence, and to open to nobody but himself on pain of dismissal, followed him into the blustering darkness out of doors.

The way was wet and dismal, and the night so black, that if Mr. Willet had been his own pilot, he would have walked into a deep horse-pond within a few hundred yards of his own house, and would certainly have terminated his career in that ignoble sphere of action. But Hugh, who had a sight as keen as any hawk's, and,

apart from that endowment, could have found his way blindfold to any place within a dozen miles, dragged old John along, quite deaf to his remonstrances, and took his own course without the slightest reference to, or notice of, his master. So they made head against the wind as they best could; Hugh crushing the wet grass beneath his heavy tread, and stalking on after his ordinary savage fashion; John Willet following at arm's length, picking his steps, and looking about him, now for bogs and ditches, and now for such stray ghosts as might be wandering abroad, with looks of as much dismay and uneasiness as his immovable face was capable of expressing.

At length they stood upon the broad gravel-walk before the Warren house. The building was profoundly dark, and none were moving near it save themselves. From one solitary turret chamber, however, there shone a ray of light; and towards this speck of comfort in the cold, cheerless, silent scene Mr. Willet bade his pilot lead him.

"The old room," said John, looking timidly upward; "Mr. Reuben's own apartment, God be with us! I wonder his brother likes to sit there so late at night—on this night too."

"Why, where else should he sit?" asked Hugh, holding the lantern to his breast to keep the candle from the wind, while he trimmed it with his fingers. "It's snug enough, an't it?"

"Snug!" said John indignantly. "You have a comfortable idea of snugness, you have, sir. Do you know what was done in that room, you ruffian?"

"Why, what is it the worse for that?" cried Hugh, looking into John's fat face. "Does it keep out the rain, and snow, and wind, the less for that? Is it less warm or dry because a man was killed there? Ha, ha, ha! Never believe it, master. One man's no such matter as that comes to."

Mr. Willet fixed his dull eyes on his follower, and began—by a species of inspiration—to think it just barely possible that he was something of a dangerous character, and that it might be advisable to get rid of him one of these days. He was too prudent to say anything, with the journey home before him; and therefore turned to the iron gate before which this brief dialogue had passed, and pulled the handle of the bell that hung beside it. The turret in which the light appeared being at one corner of the building, and only divided from the path by one of the garden walks, upon which this gate opened, Mr. Haredale threw up the window directly, and demanded who was there.

"Begging pardon, sir," said John, "I knew you sat up late, and made bold to come round, having a word to say to you."

"Willet—is it not?"

"Of the Maypole—at your service, sir."

Mr. Haredale closed the window, and withdrew. He presently appeared at a door in the bottom of the turret, and coming across the garden walk, unlocked the gate and let them in.

"You are a late visitor, Willet. What is the matter?"

"Nothing to speak of, sir," said John; "an idle tale I thought you ought to know of; nothing more."

"Let your man go forward with the lantern, and give me your hand. The stairs are crooked and narrow. Gently with your light, friend. You swing it like a censer."

Hugh, who had already reached the turret, held it more steadily, and ascended first, turning round from time to time to shed its light downward on the steps. Mr. Haredale, following next, eyed his lowering face with no great favour; and Hugh, looking down on him, returned his glances with interest, as they climbed the winding stair.

It terminated in a little ante-room adjoining that from which they had seen the light. Mr. Haredale entered first, and led the way through it into the latter chamber, where he seated himself at a writing-table from which he had risen when they rang the bell.

"Come in," he said, beckoning to old John, who remained bowing at the door. "Not you, friend," he added hastily to Hugh, who entered also. "Willet, why do you bring that fellow here?"

"Why, sir," returned John, elevating his eyebrows, and lowering his voice to the tone in which the question had been asked him, "he's a good guard, you see."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Mr. Haredale, looking towards him as he spoke. "I doubt it. He has an evil eye."

"There's no imagination in his eye," returned Mr. Willet, glancing over his shoulder at the organ in question, "certainly."

"There is no good there, be assured," said Mr. Haredale. "Wait in that little room, friend, and close the door between us."

Hugh shrugged his shoulders, and with a disdainful look, which showed either that he had overheard or that he guessed the purport of their whispering, did as he was told. When he was shut out, Mr. Haredale turned to John, and bade him go on with what he had to say, but



not to speak too loud, for there were quick ears yonder.

Thus cautioned, Mr. Willet, in an oily whisper, recited all that he had heard and said that night; laying particular stress upon his own sagacity, upon his great regard for the family, and upon his solicitude for their peace of mind and happiness. The story moved his auditor much more than he had expected. Mr. Haredale often changed his attitude, rose and paced the room, returned again, desired him to repeat, as nearly as he could, the very words that Solomon had used, and gave so many other signs of being disturbed and ill at ease, that even Mr. Willet was surprised.

"You did quite right," he said at the end of a long conversation, "to bid them keep this story secret. It is a foolish fancy on the part of this weak-brained man, bred in his fears and superstition. But Miss Haredale, though she would know it to be so, would be disturbed by it if it reached her ears; it is too nearly connected with a subject very painful to us all, to be heard with indifference. You were most prudent, and have laid me under a great obligation. I thank you very much."

This was equal to John's most sanguine expectations; but he would have preferred Mr. Haredale's looking at him, when he spoke, as if he really did thank him, to his walking up and down, speaking by fits and starts, often stopping with his eyes fixed on the ground, moving hurriedly on again, like one distracted, and seeming almost unconscious of what he said or did.

This, however, was his manner; and it was so embarrassing to John that he sat quite passive for a long time, not knowing what to do. At length he rose. Mr. Haredale stared at him for a moment as though he had quite forgotten his being present, then shook hands with him and opened the door. Hugh, who was, or feigned to be, fast asleep on the ante-chamber floor, sprang up on their entrance, and throwing his cloak about him, grasped his stick and lantern, and prepared to descend the stairs.

"Stay," said Mr. Haredale. "Will this man drink?"

"Drink! He'd drink the Thames up, if it was strong enough, sir," replied John Willet. "He'll have something when he gets home. He's better without it now, sir."

"Nay, half the distance is done," said Hugh. "What a hard master you are! I shall go home the better for one glassful half-way. Come!"

As John made no reply, Mr. Haredale brought out a glass of liquor, and gave it to Hugh, who,

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as he took it in his hand, threw part of it upon the floor.

"What do you mean by splashing your drink about a gentleman's house, sir?" said John.

"I'm drinking a toast," Hugh rejoined, holding the glass above his head, and fixing his eyes on Mr. Haredale's face; "a toast to this house and its master." With that he muttered something to himself, and drank the rest, and setting down the glass, preceded them without another word.

John was a good deal scandalised by this observance, but seeing that Mr. Haredale took little heed of what Hugh said or did, and that his thoughts were otherwise employed, he offered no apology, and went in silence down the stairs, across the walk, and through the garden-gate. They stopped upon the outer side for Hugh to hold the light while Mr. Haredale locked it on the inner; and then John saw with wonder (as he often afterwards related), that he was very pale, and that his face had changed so much and grown so haggard since their entrance, that he almost seemed another man.

They were in the open road again, and John Willet was walking on behind his escort, as he had come, thinking very steadily of what he had just now seen, when Hugh drew him suddenly aside, and almost at the same instant three horsemen swept past—the nearest brushed his shoulder even then—who, checking their steeds as suddenly as they could, stood still, and waited for their coming up.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

WHEN John Willet saw that the horsemen wheeled smartly round, and drew up three abreast in the narrow road, waiting for him and his man to join them, it occurred to him with unusual precipitation that they must be highwaymen; and had Hugh been armed with a blunderbuss, in place of his stout cudgel, he would certainly have ordered him to fire it off at a venture, and would, while the word of command was obeyed, have consulted his own personal safety in immediate flight. Under the circumstances of disadvantage, however, in which he and his guard were placed, he deemed it prudent to adopt a different style of generalship, and therefore whispered his attendant to address them in the most peaceable and courteous terms. By way of acting up to the spirit and letter of this

instruction, Hugh stepped forward, and flourishing his staff before the very eyes of the rider nearest to him, demanded roughly what he and his fellows meant by so nearly galloping over them, and why they scoured the king's highway at that late hour of night.

The man whom he addressed was beginning an angry reply in the same strain, when he was checked by the horseman in the centre, who, interposing with an air of authority, inquired in a somewhat loud but not harsh or unpleasant voice :

"Pray is this the London Road?"

"If you follow it right, it is," replied Hugh roughly.

"Nay, brother," said the same person; "you're but a churlish Englishman, if Englishman you be—which I should much doubt but for your tongue. Your companion, I am sure, will answer me more civilly. How say you, friend?"

"I say it *is* the London Road, sir," answered John. "And I wish," he added in a subdued voice, as he turned to Hugh, "that you was in any other road, you vagabond. Are you tired of your life, sir, that you go a trying to provoke three great neck-or-nothing chaps, that could keep on running over us, back'ards and for'ards, till we was dead, and then take our bodies up behind 'em, and drown us ten miles off?"

"How far is it to London?" inquired the same speaker.

"Why, from here, sir," answered John persuasively, "it's thirteen very easy mile."

The adjective was thrown in as an inducement to the travellers to ride away with all speed; but, instead of having the desired effect, it elicited from the same person the remark, "Thirteen miles! That's a long distance!" which was followed by a short pause of indecision.

"Pray," said the gentleman, "are there any inns hereabouts?"

At the word "inns," John plucked up his spirit in a surprising manner; his fears rolled off like smoke; all the landlord stirred within him.

"There are no inns," rejoined Mr. Willet, with a strong emphasis on the plural number; but there's a Inn—one Inn—the Maypole Inn. That's a Inn indeed. You won't see the like of that Inn often."

"You keep it, perhaps?" said the horseman, smiling.

"I do, sir," replied John, greatly wondering how he had found this out.

"And how far is the Maypole from here?"

"About a mile." John was going to add that it was the easiest mile in all the world, when the

third rider, who had hitherto kept a little in the rear, suddenly interposed :

"And have you one excellent bed, landlord? Hem! A bed that you can recommend—a bed that you are sure is well aired—a bed that has been slept in by some perfectly respectable and unexceptionable person."

"We don't take in no tagrag and bobtail at our house, sir," answered John. "And as to the bed itself——"

"Say, as to three beds," interposed the gentleman who had spoken before; "for we shall want three if we stay, though my friend only speaks of one."

"No, no, my lord; you are too good, you are too kind; but your life is of far too much importance to the nation, in these portentous times, to be placed upon a level with one so useless and poor as mine. A great cause, my lord, a mighty cause, depends on you. You are its leader and its champion, its advanced guard and its van. It is the cause of our altars and our homes, our country and our faith. Let *me* sleep on a chair—the carpet—anywhere. No one will repine if *I* take cold or fever. Let John Grueby pass the night beneath the open sky—no one will repine for *him*. But forty thousand men of this our island in the wave (exclusive of women and children) rivet their eyes and thoughts on Lord George Gordon; and every day, from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same, pray for his health and vigour. My lord," said the speaker, rising in his stirrups, "it is a glorious cause, and must not be forgotten. My lord, it is a mighty cause, and must not be endangered. My lord, it is a holy cause, and must not be deserted."

"It *is* a holy cause," exclaimed his lordship, lifting up his hat with great solemnity. "Amen!"

"John Grueby," said the long-winded gentleman in a tone of mild reproof, "his lordship said Amen."

"I heard my lord, sir," said the man, sitting like a statue on his horse.

"And do not *you* say Amen, likewise?"

To which John Grueby made no reply at all, but sat looking straight before him.

"You surprise me, Grueby," said the gentleman. "At a crisis like the present, when Queen Elizabeth, that maiden monarch, weeps within her tomb, and Bloody Mary, with a brow of gloom and shadow, stalks triumphant——"

"Oh, sir," cried the man gruffly, "where's the use of talking of Bloody Mary under such circumstances as the present, when my lord's wet through and tired with hard riding? Let's



either go on to London, sir, or put up at once ; or that unfort'nate Bloody Mary will have more to answer for—and she's done a deal more harm in her grave than she ever did in her lifetime, I believe."

By this time Mr. Willet, who had never heard so many words spoken together at one time, or delivered with such volubility and emphasis as by the long-winded gentleman ; and whose brain, being wholly unable to sustain or compass them, had quite given itself up for lost ; recovered so far as to observe that there was ample accommodation at the Maypole for all the party : good beds ; neat wines ; excellent entertainment for man and beast ; private rooms for large or small parties ; dinners dressed upon the shortest notice ; choice stabling, and a lock-up coach-house : and, in short, to run over such recommendatory scraps of language as were painted up on various portions of the building, and which, in the course of some forty years, he had learnt to repeat with tolerable correctness. He was considering whether it was at all possible to insert any novel sentences to the same purpose, when the gentleman who had spoken first, turning to him of the long wind, exclaimed, "What say you, Gashford ? Shall we tarry at this house he speaks of, or press forward ? You shall decide."

"I would submit, my lord, then," returned the person he appealed to, in a silky tone, "that your health and spirits—so important, under Providence, to our great cause, our pure and truthful cause"—here his lordship pulled off his hat again, though it was raining hard—"require refreshment and repose."

"Go on before, landlord, and show the way," said Lord George Gordon ; "we will follow at a foot-pace."

"If you'll give me leave, my lord," said John Grueby in a low voice, "I'll change my proper place, and ride before you. The looks of the landlord's friend are not over-honest, and it may be as well to be cautious with him."

"John Grueby is quite right," interposed Mr. Gashford, falling back hastily. "My lord, a life so precious as yours must not be put in peril. Go forward, John, by all means. If you have any reason to suspect the fellow, blow his brains out."

John made no answer, but looking straight before him, as his custom seemed to be when the secretary spoke, bade Hugh push on, and followed close behind him. Then came his lordship, with Mr. Willet at his bridle-rein ; and, last of all, his lordship's secretary—for that, it seemed, was Gashford's office.

Hugh strode briskly on, often looking back at

the servant, whose horse was close upon his heels, and glancing with a leer at his holster case of pistols, by which he seemed to set great store. He was a square-built, strong-made, bull-necked fellow, of the true English breed ; and as Hugh measured him with his eye, he measured Hugh, regarding him meanwhile with a look of bluff disdain. He was much older than the Maypole man, being to all appearance five-and-forty ; but was one of those self-possessed, hard-headed, imperturbable fellows, who, if they ever are beat at fisticuffs, or other kind of warfare, never know it, and go on coolly till they win.

"If I led you wrong now," said Hugh tauntingly, "you'd—ha, ha, ha !—you'd shoot me through the head, I suppose."

John Grueby took no more notice of this remark than if he had been deaf, and Hugh dumb ; but kept riding on, quite comfortably, with his eyes fixed on the horizon.

"Did you ever try a fall with a man when you were young, master ?" said Hugh. "Can you make any play at single-stick ?"

John Grueby looked at him sideways with the same contented air, but deigned not a word in answer.

"—Like this ?" said Hugh, giving his cudgel one of those skilful flourishes in which the rustic of that time delighted. "Whoop !"

"—Or that," returned John Grueby, beating down his guard with his whip, and striking him on the head with its butt-end. "Yes, I played a little once. You wear your hair too long ; I should have cracked your crown if it had been a little shorter."

It was a pretty smart, loud-sounding rap as it was, and evidently astonished Hugh ; who, for the moment, seemed disposed to drag his new acquaintance from his saddle. But his face betokening neither malice, triumph, rage, nor any lingering idea that he had given him offence ; his eyes gazing steadily in the old direction, and his manner being as careless and composed as if he had merely brushed away a fly ; Hugh was so puzzled, and so disposed to look upon him as a customer of almost supernatural toughness, that he merely laughed, and cried "Well done !" then, sheering off a little, led the way in silence.

Before the lapse of many minutes the party halted at the Maypole door. Lord George and his secretary, quickly dismounting, gave their horses to their servant, who, under the guidance of Hugh, repaired to the stables. Right glad to escape from the inclemency of the night, they followed Mr. Willet into the common room, and stood warming themselves and drying their clothes before the cheerful fire, while he busied

himself with such orders and preparations as his guest's high quality required.

As he bustled in and out of the room, intent on these arrangements, he had an opportunity of observing the two travellers, of whom, as yet, he knew nothing but the voice. The lord, the great personage, who did the Maypole so much honour, was about the middle height, of a slender make, and sallow complexion, with an aquiline nose, and long hair of a reddish brown, combed perfectly straight and smooth about his ears, and slightly powdered, but without the faintest vestige of a curl. He was attired, under his great-coat, in a full suit of black, quite free from any ornament, and of the most precise and sober cut. The gravity of his dress, together with a certain lankness of cheek and stiffness of deportment, added nearly ten years to his age, but his figure was that of one not yet past thirty. As he stood musing in the red glow of the fire, it was striking to observe his very bright large eye, which betrayed a restlessness of thought and purpose, singularly at variance with the studied composure and sobriety of his mien, and with his quaint and sad apparel. It had nothing harsh or cruel in its expression; neither had his face, which was thin and mild, and wore an air of melancholy; but it was suggestive of an indefinite uneasiness, which infected those who looked upon him, and filled them with a kind of pity for the man: though why it did so they would have had some trouble to explain.

Gashford, the secretary, was taller, angularly made, high-shouldered, bony, and ungraceful. His dress, in imitation of his superior, was demure and staid in the extreme; his manner, formal and constrained. This gentleman had an overhanging brow, great hands and feet and ears, and a pair of eyes that seemed to have made an unnatural retreat into his head, and to have dug themselves a cave to hide in. His manner was smooth and humble, but very sly and slinking. He wore the aspect of a man who was always lying in wait for something that *wouldn't* come to pass; but he looked patient—very patient—and fawned like a spaniel dog. Even now, while he warmed and rubbed his hands before the blaze, he had the air of one who only presumed to enjoy it in his degree as a commoner; and though he knew his lord was not regarding him, he looked into his face from time to time, and, with a meek and deferential manner, smiled as if for practice.

Such were the guests whom old John Willet, with a fixed and leaden eye, surveyed a hundred times, and to whom he now advanced, with a state candlestick in each hand, beseeching them

to follow him into a worthier chamber. "For, my lord," said John—it is odd enough, but certain people seem to have as great a pleasure in pronouncing titles as their owners have in wearing them—"this room, my lord, isn't at all the sort of place for your lordship, and I have to beg your lordship's pardon for keeping you here, my lord, one minute."

With this address, John ushered them upstairs into the state apartment, which, like many other things of state, was cold and comfortless. Their own footsteps, reverberating through the spacious room, struck upon their hearing with a hollow sound; and its damp and chilly atmosphere was rendered doubly cheerless by contrast with the homely warmth they had deserted.

It was of no use, however, to propose a return to the place they had quitted, for the preparations went on so briskly that there was no time to stop them. John, with the tall candlesticks in his hands, bowed them up to the fireplace; Hugh, striding in with a lighted brand and a pile of fire-wood, cast it down upon the hearth, and set it in a blaze; John Grueby (who had a great blue cockade in his hat, which he appeared to despise mightily) brought in the portmanteau he had carried on his horse, and placed it on the floor; and presently all three were busily engaged in drawing out the screen, laying the cloth, inspecting the beds, lighting fires in the bedrooms, expediting the supper, and making everything as cosy and as snug as might be on so short a notice. In less than an hour's time supper had been served, and ate, and cleared away; and Lord George and his secretary, with slippers on feet and legs stretched out before the fire, sat over some hot mulled wine together.

"So ends, my lord," said Gashford, filling his glass with great complacency, "the blessed work of a most blessed day."

"And of a blessed yesterday," said his lordship, raising his head.

"Ah!"—and here the secretary clasped his hands—"a blessed yesterday indeed! The Protestants of Suffolk are godly men and true. Though others of our countrymen have lost their way in darkness, even as we, my lord, did lose our road to-night, theirs is the light and glory."

"Did I move them, Gashford?" said Lord George.

"Move them, my lord! Move them! They cried to be led on against the Papists, they vowed a dreadful vengeance on their heads, they roared like men possessed—"

"But not by devils," said his lord.

"By devils! my lord! By angels."



"Yes—oh, surely—by angels, no doubt," said Lord George, thrusting his hands into his pockets, taking them out again to bite his nails, and looking uncomfortably at the fire. "Of course by angels—eh, Gashford?"

"You do not doubt it, my lord?" said the secretary.

"No—no," returned his lord. "No. Why should I? I suppose it would be decidedly irreligious to doubt it—wouldn't it, Gashford? Though there certainly were," he added, without waiting for an answer, "some plaguy ill-looking characters among them."

"When you warmed," said the secretary, looking sharply at the other's downcast eyes, which brightened slowly as he spoke; "when you warmed into that noble outbreak; when you told them that you were never of the lukewarm or the timid tribe, and bade them take heed that they were prepared to follow one who would lead them on, though to the very death; when you spoke of a hundred and twenty thousand men across the Scottish border who would take their own redress at any time, if it were not conceded; when you cried, 'Perish the Pope and all his base adherents; the penal laws against them shall never be repealed while Englishmen have hearts and hands'—and waved your own, and touched your sword; and when they cried, 'No Popery!' and you cried, 'No; not even if we wade in blood,' and they threw up their hats and cried, 'Hurrah! not even if we wade in blood! No Popery! Lord George! Down with the Papists—Vengeance on their heads;' when this was said and done, and a word from you, my lord, could raise or still the tumult—ah! then I felt what greatness was indeed, and thought, When was there ever power like this of Lord George Gordon's?"

"It's a great power. You're right. It is a great power!" he cried with sparkling eyes. "But—dear Gashford—did I really say all that?"

"And how much more!" cried the secretary, looking upwards. "Ah! how much more!"

"And I told them what you say about the one hundred and forty thousand men in Scotland, did I?" he asked with evident delight. "That was bold."

"Our cause is boldness. Truth is always bold."

"Certainly. So is religion. She's bold, Gashford?"

"The true religion is, my lord."

"And that's ours," he rejoined, moving uneasily in his seat, and biting his nails as though he would pare them to the quick. "There can be no doubt of ours being the true one. You feel as certain of that as I do, Gashford, don't you?"

"Does my lord ask *me*," whined Gashford, drawing his chair nearer with an injured air, and laying his broad flat hand upon the table; "*me*," he repeated, bending the dark hollows of his eyes upon him with an unwholesome smile, "who, stricken by the magic of his eloquence in Scotland but a year ago, abjured the errors of the Romish church, and clung to him as one whose timely hand had plucked me from a pit?"

"True. No—no. I—I didn't mean it," replied the other, shaking him by the hand, rising from his seat, and pacing restlessly about the room. "It's a proud thing to lead the people, Gashford," he added as he made a sudden halt.

"By force of reason, too," returned the pliant secretary.

"Ay, to be sure. They may cough, and jeer, and groan in Parliament, and call me fool and madman, but which of them can raise this human sea and make it swell and roar at pleasure? Not one."

"Not one," repeated Gashford.

"Which of them can say for his honesty what I can say for mine; which of them has refused a minister's bribe of one thousand pounds a year, to resign his seat in favour of another? Not one."

"Not one," repeated Gashford again—taking the lion's share of the mulled wine between-whiles.

"And as we are honest, true, and in a sacred cause, Gashford," said Lord George, with a heightened colour and in a louder voice, as he laid his fevered hand upon his shoulder, "and are the only men who regard the mass of people out of doors, or are regarded by them, we will uphold them to the last; and will raise a cry against these un-English Papists which shall re-echo through the country, and roll with a noise like thunder. I will be worthy of the motto on my coat of arms, 'Called and chosen and faithful.'"

"Called," said the secretary, "by Heaven."

"I am."

"Chosen by the people."

"Yes."

"Faithful to both."

"To the block!"

It would be difficult to convey an adequate idea of the excited manner in which he gave these answers to the secretary's promptings; of the rapidity of his utterance, or the violence of his tone and gesture; in which, struggling through his Puritan's demeanour, was something wild and ungovernable which broke through all restraint. For some minutes he walked rapidly up and down the room, then stopping suddenly, exclaimed,

"Gashford—*You* moved them yesterday too. Oh yes! You did."

"I shone with a reflected light, my lord," replied the humble secretary, laying his hand upon his heart. "I did my best."

"You did well," said his master, "and are a great and worthy instrument. If you will ring for John Grueby to carry the portmanteau into my room, and will wait here while I undress, we will dispose of business as usual, if you're not too tired."

"Too tired, my lord!—But this is his consideration! Christian from head to foot." With which soliloquy, the secretary tilted the jug, and looked very hard into the mulled wine, to see how much remained.

John Willet and John Grueby appeared together. The one bearing the great candlesticks, and the other the portmanteau, showed the deluded lord into his chamber; and left the secretary alone, to yawn and shake himself, and finally, to fall asleep before the fire.

"Now, Mr. Gashford, sir," said John Grueby in his ear, after what appeared to him a moment of unconsciousness; "my lord's abed."

"Oh! Very good, John," was his mild reply.

"Thank you, John. Nobody need sit up. I know my room."

"I hope you're not a-going to trouble your head to-night, or my lord's head neither, with anything more about Bloody Mary," said John. "I wish the blessed old creetur had never been born."

"I said you might go to bed, John," returned the secretary. "You didn't hear me, I think."

"Between Bloody Marys, and blue cockades, and glorious Queen Besses, and no Poperys, and Protestant associations, and making of speeches," pursued John Grueby, looking, as usual, a long way off, and taking no notice of this hint, "my lord's half off his head. When we go out o' doors, such a set of ragamuffins comes a shouting after us, 'Gordon for ever!' that I'm ashamed of myself, and don't know where to look. When we're indoors, they come a roaring and screaming about the house like so many devils; and my lord, instead of ordering them to be drove away, goes out into the balcony and demeans himself by making speeches to 'em, and calls 'em 'Men of England,' and 'Fellow-countrymen,' as if he was fond of 'em, and thanked 'em for coming. I can't make it out, but they're all mixed up somehow or another with that unfortun'ate Bloody Mary, and call her name out till they're hoarse. They're all Protestants too—every man and boy among 'em: and Protestants is very fond of spoons I find, and silver plate in general,

whenever area-gates is left open accidentally. I wish that was the worst of it, and that no more harm might be to come; but if you don't stop these ugly customers in time, Mr. Gashford (and I know you; you're the man that blows the fire), you'll find 'em grow a little bit too strong for you. One of these evenings, when the weather gets warmer and Protestants are thirsty, they'll be pulling London down,—and I never heerd that Bloody Mary went as far as *that*."

Gashford had vanished long ago, and these remarks had been bestowed on empty air. Not at all discomposed by the discovery, John Grueby fixed his hat on wrong side foremost, that he might be unconscious of the shadow of the obnoxious cockade, and withdrew to bed; shaking his head in a very gloomy and prophetic manner until he reached his chamber.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

**G**ASHFORD, with a smiling face, but still with looks of profound deference and humility, betook himself towards his master's room, smoothing his hair down as he went, and humming a psalm tune. As he approached Lord George's door, he cleared his throat and hummed more vigorously.

There was a remarkable contrast between this man's occupation at the moment, and the expression of his countenance, which was singularly repulsive and malicious. His beetling brow almost obscured his eyes; his lip was curled contemptuously; his very shoulders seemed to sneer in stealthy whisperings with his great flapped ears.

"Hush!" he muttered softly, as he peeped in at the chamber door. "He seems to be asleep. Pray Heaven he is! Too much watching, too much care, too much thought—ah! Lord preserve him for a martyr! He is a saint, if ever saint drew breath on this bad earth."

Placing his light upon a table, he walked on tiptoe to the fire, and sitting in a chair before it with his back towards the bed, went on communing with himself like one who thought aloud:

"The saviour of his country and his country's religion, the friend of his poor countrymen, the enemy of the proud and harsh; beloved of the rejected and oppressed, adored by forty thousand bold and loyal English hearts—what happy slumbers his should be!" And here he sighed, and warmed his hands, and shook his head as



men do when their hearts are full, and heaved another sigh, and warmed his hands again.

"Why, Gashford?" said Lord George, who was lying broad awake upon his side, and had been staring at him from his entrance.

"My—my lord," said Gashford, starting and looking round as though in great surprise. "I have disturbed you!"

"I have not been sleeping."

"Not sleeping!" he repeated with assumed confusion. "What can I say for having in your presence given utterance to thoughts—but they were sincere—they were sincere!" exclaimed the secretary, drawing his sleeve in a hasty way across his eyes, "and why should I regret your having heard them?"

"Gashford," said the poor lord, stretching out his hand with manifest emotion, "do not regret it. You love me well, I know—too well. I don't deserve such homage."

Gashford made no reply, but grasped the hand and pressed it to his lips. Then rising, and taking from the trunk a little desk, he placed it on a table near the fire, unlocked it with a key he carried in his pocket, sat down before it, took out a pen, and, before dipping it in the inkstand, sucked it—to compose the fashion of his mouth perhaps, on which a smile was hovering yet.

"How do our numbers stand since last enrolling night?" inquired Lord George. "Are we really forty thousand strong, or do we still speak in round numbers when we take the Association at that amount?"

"Our total now exceeds that number by a score and three," Gashford replied, casting his eyes upon his papers.

"The funds?"

"Not *very* improving; but there is some manna in the wilderness, my lord. Hem! On Friday night the widows' mites dropped in. 'Forty scavengers, three-and-fourpence. An aged pew-opener of St. Martin's parish, sixpence. A bell-ringer of the Established Church, sixpence. A Protestant infant, newly born, one halfpenny. The United Link Boys, three shillings—one bad. The anti-Popish prisoners in Newgate, five-and-fourpence. A friend in Bedlam, half-a-crown. Dennis the hangman, one shilling.'"

"That Dennis," said his lordship, "is an earnest man. I marked him in the crowd in Welbeck Street last Friday."

"A good man," rejoined the secretary; "a staunch, sincere, and truly zealous man."

"He should be encouraged," said Lord George. "Make a note of Dennis. I'll talk with him."

Gashford obeyed, and went on reading from his list:

"The Friends of Reason, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Liberty, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Peace, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Charity, half-a-guinea. The Friends of Mercy, half-a-guinea. The Associated Rememberers of Bloody Mary, half-a-guinea. The United Bulldogs, half-a-guinea."

"The United Bulldogs," said Lord George, biting his nails most horribly, "are a new society, are they not?"

"Formerly the 'Prentice Knights, my lord. The indentures of the old members expiring by degrees, they changed their name, it seems, though they still have 'prentices among them, as well as workmen."

"What is their president's name?" inquired Lord George.

"President," said Gashford, reading, "Mr. Simon Tappertit."

"I remember him. The little man, who sometimes brings an elderly sister to our meetings, and sometimes another female too, who is conscientious, I have no doubt, but not well-favoured?"

"The very same, my lord."

"Tappertit is an earnest man," said Lord George thoughtfully. "Eh, Gashford?"

"One of the foremost among them all, my lord. He snuffs the battle from afar, like the war-horse. He throws his hat up in the street as if he were inspired, and makes most stirring speeches from the shoulders of his friends."

"Make a note of Tappertit," said Lord George Gordon. "We may advance him to a place of trust."

"That," rejoined the secretary, doing as he was told, "is all—except Mrs. Varden's box (fourteenth time of opening), seven shillings and sixpence in silver and copper, and half-a-guinea in gold; and Miggs (being the saving of a quarter's wages), one-and-threepence."

"Miggs," said Lord George. "Is that a man?"

"The name is entered on the list as a woman," replied the secretary. "I think she is the tall spare female of whom you spoke just now, my lord, as not being well-favoured, who sometimes comes to hear the speeches—along with Tappertit and Mrs. Varden."

"Mrs. Varden is the elderly lady, then, is she?"

The secretary nodded, and rubbed the bridge of his nose with the feather of his pen.

"She is a zealous sister," said Lord George. "Her collection goes on prosperously, and is pursued with fervour. Has her husband joined?"

"A malignant," returned the secretary, folding up his papers. "Unworthy such a wife. He

remains in outer darkness, and steadily refuses."

"The consequences be upon his own head!—Gashford!"

"My lord!"

"You don't think," he turned restlessly in his bed as he spoke, "these people will desert me when the hour arrives? I have spoken boldly for them, ventured much, suppressed nothing. They'll not fall off, will they?"

"No fear of that, my lord," said Gashford with a meaning look, which was rather the involuntary expression of his own thoughts than intended as any confirmation of his words, for the other's face was turned away. "Be sure there is no fear of that."

"Nor," he said with a more restless motion than before, "of their—— But they *can* sustain no harm from leaguings for this purpose. Right is on our side, though Might may be against us. You feel as sure of that as I—honestly, you do?"

The secretary was beginning with "You do not doubt," when the other interrupted him, and impatiently rejoined:

"Doubt! No. Who says I doubt? If I doubted, should I cast away relatives, friends, everything, for this unhappy country's sake; this unhappy country," he cried, springing up in bed, after repeating the phrase "unhappy country's sake" to himself at least a dozen times, "forsaken of God and man, delivered over to a dangerous confederacy of Popish powers; the prey of corruption, idolatry, and despotism? Who says I doubt? Am I called, and chosen, and faithful? Tell me. Am I, or am I not?"

"To God, the country, and yourself," cried Gashford.

"I am. I will be. I say again, I will be: to the block. Who says as much? Do you? Does any man alive?"

The secretary drooped his head with an expression of perfect acquiescence in anything that had been said or might be; and Lord George, gradually sinking down upon his pillow, fell asleep.

Although there was something very ludicrous in his vehement manner, taken in conjunction with his meagre aspect and ungraceful presence, it would scarcely have provoked a smile in any man of kindly feeling; or even if it had, he would have felt sorry and almost angry with himself next moment, for yielding to the impulse. This lord was sincere in his violence and in his wavering. A nature prone to false enthusiasm, and the vanity of being a leader, were the worst qualities apparent in his composition. All the

rest was weakness—sheer weakness; and it is the unhappy lot of thoroughly weak men, that their very sympathies, affections, confidences—all the qualities which in better-constituted minds are virtues—dwindle into foibles, or turn into downright vices.

Gashford, with many a sly look towards the bed, sat chuckling at his master's folly, until his deep and heavy breathing warned him that he might retire. Locking his desk, and replacing it within the trunk (but not before he had taken from a secret lining two printed handbills), he cautiously withdrew; looking back, as he went, at the pale face of the slumbering man, above whose head the dusty plumes that crowned the Maypole couch waved drearily and sadly as though it were a bier.

Stopping on the staircase to listen that all was quiet, and to take off his shoes lest his footsteps should alarm any light sleeper who might be near at hand, he descended to the ground-floor, and thrust one of his bills beneath the great door of the house. That done, he crept softly back to his own chamber, and from the window let another fall—carefully wrapped round a stone to save it from the wind—into the yard below.

They were addressed on the back "To every Protestant into whose hands this shall come," and bore within what follows:

"Men and Brethren. Whoever shall find this letter, will take it as a warning to join, without delay, the friends of Lord George Gordon. There are great events at hand; and the times are dangerous and troubled. Read this carefully, keep it clean, and drop it somewhere else. For King and Country. Union."

"More seed, more seed," said Gashford as he closed the window. "When will the harvest come?"

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

**T**O surround anything, however monstrous or ridiculous, with an air of mystery, is to invest it with a secret charm, and power of attraction which to the crowd is irresistible. False priests, false prophets, false doctors, false patriots, false prodigies of every kind, veiling their proceedings in mystery, have always addressed themselves at an immense advantage to the popular credulity, and have been, perhaps, more indebted to that resource in gaining and keeping for a time the upper hand of Truth and Common Sense, than to any half-



dozen items in the whole catalogue of imposture. Curiosity is, and has been from the creation of the world, a master passion. To awaken it, to gratify it by slight degrees, and yet leave something always in suspense, is to establish the surest hold that can be had, in wrong, on the unthinking portion of mankind.

If a man had stood on London Bridge, calling till he was hoarse upon the passers-by to join with Lord George Gordon, although for an object which no man understood, and which in

that very incident had a charm of its own, the probability is that he might have influenced a score of people in a month. If all zealous Protestants had been publicly urged to join an association for the avowed purpose of singing a hymn or two occasionally, and hearing some indifferent speeches made, and ultimately of petitioning Parliament not to pass an act for abolishing the penal laws against Roman Catholic priests, the penalty of perpetual imprisonment denounced against those who educated children



LORD GEORGE GORDON LEAVING THE MAYPOLE.

in that persuasion, and the disqualification of all members of the Romish church to inherit real property in the United Kingdom by right of purchase or descent,—matters so far removed from the business and bosoms of the mass might perhaps have called together a hundred people. But when vague rumours got abroad, that in this Protestant Association a secret power was mustering against the government for undefined and mighty purposes; when the air was filled with whispers of a confederacy among the Popish

powers to degrade and enslave England, establish an Inquisition in London, and turn the pens of Smithfield Market into stakes and cauldrons; when terrors and alarms which no man understood were perpetually broached, both in and out of Parliament, by one enthusiast who did not understand himself, and bygone bugbears, which had lain quietly in their graves for centuries, were raised again to haunt the ignorant and credulous; when all this was done, as it were, in the dark, and secret invitations to join the Great

Protestant Association in defence of religion, life, and liberty, were dropped in the public ways, thrust under the house-doors, tossed in at windows, and pressed into the hands of those who trod the streets by night; when they glared from every wall, and shone on every post and pillar, so that stocks and stones appeared infected with the common fear, urging all men to join together blindfold in resistance of they knew not what, they knew not why;—then the mania spread indeed, and the body, still increasing every day, grew forty thousand strong.

So said, at least, in this month of March, 1780, Lord George Gordon, the Association's president. Whether it was the fact or otherwise, few men knew, or cared to ascertain. It had never made any public demonstration; had scarcely ever been heard of, save through him; had never been seen; and was supposed by many to be the mere creature of his disordered brain. He was accustomed to talk largely about numbers of men—stimulated, as it was inferred, by certain successful disturbances, arising out of the same subject, which had occurred in Scotland in the previous year; was looked upon as a cracked-brained member of the Lower House, who attacked all parties and sided with none, and was very little regarded. It was known that there was discontent abroad—there always is; he had been accustomed to address the people by placard, speech, and pamphlet, upon other questions; nothing had come, in England, of his past exertions, and nothing was apprehended from his present. Just as he has come upon the reader, he had come, from time to time, upon the public, and been forgotten in a day; as suddenly as he appears in these pages, after a blank of five long years, did he and his proceedings begin to force themselves, about this period, upon the notice of thousands of people, who had mingled in active life during the whole interval, and who, without being deaf or blind to passing events, had scarcely ever thought of him before.

"My lord," said Gashford in his ear as he drew the curtains of his bed betimes; "my lord!"

"Yes—who's that? What is it?"

"The clock has struck nine," returned the secretary with meekly folded hands. "You have slept well? I hope you have slept well? If my prayers are heard, you are refreshed indeed."

"To say the truth, I have slept so soundly," said Lord George, rubbing his eyes and looking round the room, "that I don't remember quite—What place is this?"

"My lord!" cried Gashford with a smile.

"Oh!" returned his superior. "Yes. You're not a Jew then?"

"A Jew!" exclaimed the pious secretary, recoiling.

"I dreamed that we were Jews, Gashford. You and I—both of us—Jews with long beards."

"Heaven forbid, my lord! We might as well be Papists."

"I suppose we might," returned the other very quickly. "Eh? You really think so, Gashford?"

"Surely I do," the secretary cried with looks of great surprise.

"Humph!" he muttered. "Yes, that seems reasonable."

"I hope my lord——" the secretary began.

"Hope!" he echoed, interrupting him. "Why do you say you hope? There's no harm in thinking of such things."

"Not in dreams," returned the secretary.

"In dreams! No, nor waking either."

"—'Called, and chosen, and faithful,'" said Gashford, taking up Lord George's watch, which lay upon a chair, and seeming to read the inscription on the seal abstractedly.

It was the slightest action possible, not obtruded on his notice, and apparently the result of a moment's absence of mind, not worth remark. But as the words were uttered, Lord George, who had been going on impetuously, stopped short, reddened, and was silent. Apparently quite unconscious of this change in his demeanour, the wily secretary stepped a little apart, under pretence of pulling up the window blind, and returning, when the other had had time to recover, said:

"The holy cause goes bravely on, my lord. I was not idle, even last night. I dropped two of the handbills before I went to bed, and both are gone this morning. Nobody in the house has mentioned the circumstance of finding them, though I have been down-stairs full half an hour. One or two recruits will be their first fruit, I predict; and who shall say how many more, with Heaven's blessing on your inspired exertions?"

"It was a famous device in the beginning," replied Lord George; "an excellent device, and did good service in Scotland. It was quite worthy of you. You remind me not to be a sluggard, Gashford, when the vineyard is menaced with destruction, and may be trodden down by Papist feet. Let the horses be saddled in half an hour. We must be up and doing!"

He said this with a heightened colour, and in a tone of such enthusiasm, that the secretary deemed all further prompting needless, and withdrew.



"—Dreaded he was a Jew," he said thoughtfully, as he closed the bedroom door. "He may come to that before he dies. It's like enough. Well! After a time, and provided I lost nothing by it, I don't see why that religion shouldn't suit me as well as any other. There are rich men among the Jews; shaving is very troublesome;—yes, it would suit me well enough. For the present, though, we must be Christian to the core. Our prophetic motto will suit all creeds in their turn, that's a comfort." Reflecting on this source of consolation, he reached the sitting-room, and rang the bell for breakfast.

Lord George was quickly dressed (for his plain toilet was easily made), and, as he was no less frugal in his repasts than in his Puritan attire, his share of the meal was soon dispatched. The secretary, however, more devoted to the good things of this world, or more intent on sustaining his strength and spirits for the sake of the Protestant cause, ate and drank to the last minute, and required, indeed, some three or four reminders from John Grueby before he could resolve to tear himself away from Mr. Willet's plentiful providing.

At length he came down-stairs, wiping his greasy mouth, and having paid John Willet's bill, climbed into his saddle. Lord George, who had been walking up and down before the house talking to himself with earnest gestures, mounted his horse; and returning old John Willet's stately bow, as well as the parting salutation of a dozen idlers whom the rumour of a live lord being about to leave the Maypole had gathered round the porch, they rode away, with stout John Grueby in the rear.

If Lord George Gordon had appeared in the eyes of Mr. Willet, overnight, a nobleman of somewhat quaint and odd exterior, the impression was confirmed this morning, and increased a hundred-fold. Sitting bolt upright upon his bony steed, with his long, straight hair dangling about his face and fluttering in the wind; his limbs all angular and rigid, his elbows stuck out on either side ungracefully, and his whole frame jugged and shaken at every motion of his horse's feet; a more grotesque or more ungainly figure can hardly be conceived. In lieu of whip, he carried in his hand a great gold-headed cane, as large as any footman carries in these days; and his various modes of holding this unwieldy weapon—now upright before his face like the sabre of a horse-soldier, now over his shoulder like a musket, now between his finger and thumb, but always in some uncouth and awkward fashion—contributed in no small degree to the absurdity of his appearance. Stiff, lank, and solemn,

dressed in an unusual manner, and ostentatiously exhibiting—whether by design or accident—all his peculiarities of carriage, gesture, and conduct; all the qualities, natural and artificial, in which he differed from other men; he might have moved the sternest looker-on to laughter, and fully provoked the smiles and whispered jests which greeted his departure from the Maypole Inn.

Quite unconscious, however, of the effect he produced, he trotted on beside his secretary, talking to himself nearly all the way, until they came within a mile or two of London, when now and then some passenger went by who knew him by sight, and pointed him out to some one else, and perhaps stood looking after him, or cried in jest or earnest as it might be, "Hurrah, Geordie! No Popery!" At which he would gravely pull off his hat, and bow. When they reached the town and rode along the streets, these notices became more frequent; some laughed, some hissed, some turned their heads and smiled, some wondered who he was, some ran along the pavement by his side and cheered. When this happened in a crush of carts and chairs and coaches, he would make a dead stop, and pulling off his hat, cry, "Gentlemen, No Popery!" to which the gentlemen would respond with lusty voices, and with three times three; and then, on he would go again, with a score or so of the raggedest following at his horse's heels, and shouting till their throats were parched.

The old ladies, too—there were a great many old ladies in the streets, and these all knew him. Some of them—not those of the highest rank, but such as sold fruit from baskets and carried burdens—clapped their shrivelled hands, and raised a weazen, piping, shrill "Hurrah, my lord." Others waved their hands or handkerchiefs, or shook their fans or parasols, or threw up windows, and called in haste to those within to come and see. All these marks of popular esteem he received with profound gravity and respect; bowing very low, and so frequently that his hat was more off his head than on; and looking up at the houses, as he passed along, with the air of one who was making a public entry, and yet was not puffed up or proud.

So they rode (to the deep and unspeakable disgust of John Grueby) the whole length of Whitechapel, Leadenhall Street, and Cheapside, and into St. Paul's Churchyard. Arriving close to the cathedral, he halted; spoke to Gashford; and looking upward at its lofty dome, shook his head, as though he said, "The Church in Danger!" Then, to be sure, the bystanders

stretched their throats indeed; and he went on again with mighty acclamations from the mob, and lower bows than ever.

So along the Strand, up Swallow Street, into the Oxford Road, and thence to his house in Welbeck Street, near Cavendish Square, whither he was attended by a few dozen idlers; of whom he took leave on the steps with this brief parting, "Gentlemen, No Popery. Good day. God bless you." This, being rather a shorter address than they expected, was received with some displeasure, and cries of "A speech! a speech!" which might have been complied with, but that John Grueby, making a mad charge upon them with all three horses, on his way to the stables, caused them to disperse into the adjoining fields, where they presently fell to pitch-and-toss, chuck-farthing, odd-or-even, dog-fighting, and other Protestant recreations.

In the afternoon Lord George came forth again, dressed in a black velvet coat, and trousers and waistcoat of the Gordon plaid, all of the same Quaker cut; and in this costume, which made him look a dozen times more strange and singular than before, went down on foot to Westminster. Gashford, meanwhile, bestirred himself in business matters; with which he was still engaged when, shortly after dusk, John Grueby entered and announced a visitor.

"Let him come in," said Gashford.

"Here! come in!" growled John to somebody without. "You're a Protestant, an't you?"

"I should think so," replied a deep, gruff voice.

"You've the looks of it," said John Grueby. "I'd have known you for one anywhere." With which remark he gave the visitor admission, retired, and shut the door.

The man who now confronted Gashford was a squat, thick-set personage, with a low retreating forehead, a coarse shock head of hair, and eyes so small and near together, that his broken nose alone seemed to prevent their meeting and fusing into one of the usual size. A dingy handkerchief twisted like a cord about his neck, left its great veins exposed to view, and they were swollen and starting, as though with gulping down strong passions, malice, and ill-will. His dress was of threadbare velveteen—a faded, rusty, whitened black, like the ashes of a pipe or a coal fire after a day's extinction; discoloured with the soils of many a stale debauch, and reeking yet with pothouse odours. In lieu of buckles at his knees, he wore unequal loops of packthread; and in his grimy hands he held a knotted stick, the knob of which was carved into a rough likeness of his own vile face. Such

was the visitor who doffed his three-cornered hat in Gashford's presence, and waited, leering, for his notice.

"Ah! Dennis!" cried the secretary. "Sit down."

"I see my lord down yonder," cried the man, with a jerk of his thumb towards the quarter that he spoke of, "and he says to me, says my lord, 'If you've nothing to do, Dennis, go up to my house and talk with Muster Gashford.' Of course I'd nothing to do, you know. These an't my working hours. Ha, ha! I was a taking the air when I see my lord, that's what I was doing. I takes the air by night, as the howls does, Muster Gashford."

"And sometimes in the daytime, eh?" said the secretary—"when you go out in state you know."

"Ha, ha!" roared the fellow, sniting his leg; "for a gentleman as 'ull say a pleasant thing in a pleasant way, give me Muster Gashford agin all London and Westminster! My lord an't a bad 'un at that, but he's a fool to you. Ah to be sure,—when I go out in state."

"And have your carriage," said the secretary; "and your chaplain, eh? and all the rest of it?"

"You'll be the death of me," cried Dennis with another roar, "you will. But what's in the wind now, Muster Gashford," he asked hoarsely, "eh? Are we to be under orders to pull down one of them Popish chapels—or what?"

"Hush!" said the secretary, suffering the faintest smile to play upon his face. "Hush! God bless me, Dennis! We associate, you know, for strictly peaceable and lawful purposes."

"I know, bless you," returned the man, thrusting his tongue into his cheek; "I entered a purpose, didn't I?"

"No doubt," said Gashford, smiling as before. And when he said so, Dennis roared again, and smote his leg still harder, and falling into fits of laughter, wiped his eyes with the corner of his neckerchief, and cried, "Muster Gashford agin all England hollow!"

"Lord George and I were talking of you last night," said Gashford after a pause. "He says you are a very earnest fellow."

"So I am," returned the hangman.

"And that you truly hate the Papists."

"So I do," and he confirmed it with a good round oath. "Lookye here, Muster Gashford," said the fellow, laying his hat and stick upon the floor, and slowly beating the palm of one hand with the fingers of the other. "Ob-serve. I'm a constitutional officer that works for my



living, and does my work creditable. Do I, or do I not?"

"Unquestionably."

"Very good. Stop a minute. My work is sound, Protestant, constitutional, English work. Is it, or is it not?"

"No man alive can doubt it."

"Nor dead neither. Parliament says this here—says Parliament, 'If any man, woman, or child does anything which goes again a certain number of our acts——' How many hanging

laws may there be at this present time, Muster Gashford? Fifty?"

"I don't exactly know how many," replied Gashford, leaning back in his chair and yawning; "a great number though."

"Well; say fifty. Parliament says, 'If any man, woman, or child does anything again any one of them fifty acts, that man, woman, or child shall be worked off by Dennis.' George the Third steps in when they number very strong at the end of a sessions, and says, 'These are



"HA, HA!" ROARED THE FELLOW, SMITING HIS LEG; "FOR A GENTLEMAN AS 'ULL SAY A PLEASANT THING IN A PLEASANT WAY, GIVE ME MUSTER GASHFORD AGIN ALL LONDON AND WESTMINSTER!"

too many for Dennis. I'll have half for *myself*, and Dennis shall have half for *himself*; and sometimes he throws me in one over that I don't expect, as he did three years ago, when I got Mary Jones, a young woman of nineteen who come up to Tyburn with a infant at her breast, and was worked off for taking a piece of cloth off the counter of a shop in Ludgate Hill, and putting it down again when the shopman see her; and who had never done any harm before, and only tried to do that in consequence of her husband having been pressed three weeks previous, and she being left to beg, with two young children—

as was proved upon the trial. Ha, ha!—Well! That being the law and the practice of England, is the glory of England, an't it, Muster Gashford?"

"Certainly," said the secretary.

"And in times to come," pursued the hangman, "if our grandsons should think of their grandfathers' times, and find these things altered, they'll say, 'Those were days indeed, and we've been going downhill ever since.'—Won't they, Muster Gashford?"

"I have no doubt they will," said the secretary.

"Well then, look here," said the hangman. "If these Papists gets into power, and begins to boil and roast instead of hang, what becomes of my work? If they touch my work, that's a part of so many laws, what becomes of the laws in general, what becomes of the religion, what becomes of the country?—Did you ever go to church, Muster Gashford?"

"Ever!" repeated the secretary with some indignation; "of course."

"Well," said the ruffian, "I've been once—twice, counting the time I was christened—and when I heard the Parliament prayed for, and thought how many new hanging laws they made every sessions, I considered that I was prayed for. Now mind, Muster Gashford," said the fellow, taking up his stick and shaking it with a ferocious air, "I mustn't have my Protestant work touched, nor this here Protestant state of things altered in no degree, if I can help it; I mustn't have no Papists interfering with me, unless they come to me to be worked off in course of law; I mustn't have no biling, no roasting, no frying—nothing but hanging. My lord may well call me an earnest fellow. In support of the great Protestant principle of having plenty of that, I'll," and here he beat his club upon the ground, "burn, fight, kill—do anything you bid me, so that it's bold and devilish—though the end of it was, that I got hung myself.—There, Muster Gashford!"

He appropriately followed up this frequent prostitution of a noble word to the vilest purposes by pouring out, in a kind of ecstasy, at least a score of most tremendous oaths; then wiped his heated face upon his neckerchief, and cried, "No Popery! I'm a religious man, by G—!"

Gashford had leant back in his chair, regarding him with eyes so sunken, and so shadowed by his heavy brows, that, for aught the hangman saw of them, he might have been stone blind. He remained smiling in silence for a short time longer, and then said, slowly and distinctly:

"You are indeed an earnest fellow, Dennis—a most valuable fellow—the staunchest man I know of in our ranks. But you must calm yourself; you must be peaceful, lawful, mild as any lamb. I am sure you will be, though."

"Ay, ay, we shall see, Muster Gashford, we shall see. You won't have to complain of me," returned the other, shaking his head.

"I am sure I shall not," said the secretary in the same mild tone, and with the same emphasis. "We shall have, we think, about next month or May, when this Papist Relief Bill comes

before the House, to convene our whole body for the first time. My lord has thoughts of our walking in procession through the streets—just as an innocent display of strength—and accompanying our petition down to the door of the House of Commons."

"The sooner the better," said Dennis with another oath.

"We shall have to draw up in divisions, our numbers being so large; and I believe I may venture to say," resumed Gashford, affecting not to hear the interruption, "though I have no direct instructions to that effect—that Lord George has thought of you as an excellent leader for one of these parties. I have no doubt you would be an admirable one."

"Try me," said the fellow with an ugly wink.

"You would be cool, I know," pursued the secretary, still smiling, and still managing his eyes so that he could watch him closely, and really not be seen in turn, "obedient to orders, and perfectly temperate. You would lead your party into no danger I am certain."

"I'd lead them, Muster Gashford——" the hangman was beginning in a reckless way, when Gashford started forward, laid his finger on his lips, and feigned to write, just as the door was opened by John Grueby.

"Oh!" said John, looking in; "here's another Protestant."

"Some other room, John," cried Gashford in his blandest voice. "I am engaged just now."

But John had brought this new visitor to the door, and he walked in unbidden as the words were uttered; giving to view the form and features, rough attire, and reckless air of Hugh.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

**T**HE secretary put his hand before his eyes to shade them from the glare of the lamp, and for some moments looked at Hugh with a frowning brow, as if he remembered to have seen him lately, but could not call to mind where, or on what occasion. His uncertainty was very brief, for, before Hugh had spoken a word, he said, as his countenance cleared up:

"Ay, ay, I recollect. It's quite right, John, you needn't wait. Don't go, Dennis."

"Your servant, master," said Hugh as Grueby disappeared.

"Yours, friend," returned the secretary in his



smoothest manner. "What brings *you* here? We left nothing behind us, I hope?"

Hugh gave a short laugh, and thrusting his hand into his breast, produced one of the hand-bills, soiled and dirty from lying out of doors all night, which he laid upon the secretary's desk after flattening it upon his knee, and smoothing out the wrinkles with his heavy palm.

"Nothing but that, master. It fell into good hands, you see."

"What is this?" said Gashford, turning it over with an air of perfectly natural surprise. "Where did you get it from, my good fellow; what does it mean? I don't understand this at all."

A little disconcerted by this reception, Hugh looked from the secretary to Dennis, who had risen and was standing at the table too, observing the stranger by stealth, and seeming to derive the utmost satisfaction from his manners and appearance. Considering himself silently appealed to by this action, Mr. Dennis shook his head thrice, as if to say of Gashford, "No. He don't know anything at all about it. I know he don't. I'll take my oath he don't;" and hiding his profile from Hugh with one long end of his frouzy neckerchief, nodded and chuckled behind this screen in extreme approval of the secretary's proceedings.

"It tells the man that finds it to come here, don't it?" asked Hugh. "I'm no scholar myself, but I showed it to a friend, and he said it did."

"It certainly does," said Gashford, opening his eyes to their utmost width; "really this is the most remarkable circumstance I have ever known. How did you come by this piece of paper, my good friend?"

"Muster Gashford," wheezed the hangman under his breath, "agin all Newgate!"

Whether Hugh heard him, or saw by his manner that he was being played upon, or perceived the secretary's drift of himself, he came in his blunt way to the point at once.

"Here!" he said, stretching out his hand and taking it back; "never mind the bill, or what it says, or what it don't say. You don't know anything about it, master,—no more do I,—no more does he," glancing at Dennis. "None of us know what it means, or where it comes from: there's an end of that. Now, I want to make one against the Catholics. I'm a No-Popery man, and ready to be sworn in. That's what I've come here for."

"Put him down on the roll, Muster Gashford," said Dennis approvingly. "That's the

way to go to work—right to the end at once, and no palaver."

"What's the use of shooting wide of the mark, eh, old boy?" cried Hugh.

"My sentiments all over!" rejoined the hangman. "This is the sort of chap for my division, Muster Gashford. Down with him, sir. Put him on the roll. I'd stand godfather to him, if he was to be christened in a bonfire made of the ruins of the Bank of England."

With these and other expressions of confidence of the like flattering kind, Mr. Dennis gave him a hearty slap on the back, which Hugh was not slow to return.

"No Popery, brother!" cried the hangman.

"No Poperty, brother!" responded Hugh.

"Popery, Popery," said the secretary with his usual mildness.

"It's all the same," cried Dennis. "It's all right. Down with him, Muster Gashford! Down with everybody, down with everything! Hurrah for the Protestant religion! That's the time of day, Muster Gashford!"

The secretary regarded them both with a very favourable expression of countenance, while they gave loose to these and other demonstrations of their patriotic purpose; and was about to make some remark aloud, when Dennis, stepping up to him, and shading his mouth with his hand, said, in a hoarse whisper, as he nudged him with his elbow:

"Don't split upon a constitutional officer's profession, Muster Gashford. There are popular prejudices, you know, and he mightn't like it. Wait till he comes to be more intimate with me. He's a fine-built chap, an't he?"

"A powerful fellow indeed!"

"Did you ever, Muster Gashford," whispered Dennis with a horrible kind of admiration, such as that with which a cannibal might regard his intimate friend when hungry,—“did you ever”—and here he drew still closer to his ear, and fenced his mouth with both his open hands—“see such a throat as his? Do but cast your eye upon it. There's a neck for stretching, Muster Gashford!”

The secretary assented to this proposition with the best grace he could assume—it is difficult to feign a true professional relish: which is eccentric sometimes—and after asking the candidate a few unimportant questions, proceeded to enrol him a member of the Great Protestant Association of England. If anything could have exceeded Mr. Dennis's joy on the happy conclusion of this ceremony, it would have been the rapture with which he received the announcement that the new member could neither read

nor write: those two arts being (as Mr. Dennis swore) the greatest possible curse a civilised community could know, and militating more against the professional emoluments and usefulness of the great constitutional office he had the honour to hold, than any adverse circumstances that could present themselves to his imagination.

The enrolment being completed, and Hugh having been informed by Gashford, in his peculiar manner, of the peaceful and strictly lawful objects contemplated by the body to which he now belonged—during which recital Mr. Dennis nudged him very much with his elbow, and made divers remarkable faces—the secretary gave them both to understand that he desired to be alone. Therefore they took their leaves without delay, and came out of the house together.

“Are you walking, brother?” said Dennis.

“Ay!” returned Hugh. “Where you will.”

“That’s social,” said his new friend. “Which way shall we take? Shall we go and have a look at doors that we shall make a pretty good clattering at before long—eh, brother?”

Hugh answering in the affirmative, they went slowly down to Westminster, where both Houses of Parliament were then sitting. Mingling in the crowd of carriages, horses, servants, chairmen, link-boys, porters, and idlers of all kinds, they lounged about; while Hugh’s new friend pointed out to him significantly the weak parts of the building, how easy it was to get into the lobby, and so to the very door of the House of Commons; and how plainly, when they marched down there in grand array, their roars and shouts would be heard by the members inside; with a great deal more to the same purpose, all of which Hugh received with manifest delight.

He told him, too, who some of the Lords and Commons were, by name, as they came in and out; whether they were friendly to the Papists or otherwise; and bade him take notice of their liveries and equipages, that he might be sure of them in case of need. Sometimes he drew him close to the windows of a passing carriage, that he might see its master’s face by the light of the lamps; and, both in respect of people and localities, he showed so much acquaintance with everything around, that it was plain he had often studied there before; as indeed, when they grew a little more confidential, he confessed he had.

Perhaps the most striking part of all this was, the number of people—never in groups of more than two or three together—who seemed to be skulking about the crowd for the same purpose.

To the greater part of these, a slight nod or a look from Hugh’s companion was sufficient greeting; but, now and then, some man would come and stand beside him in the throng, and, without turning his head or appearing to communicate with him, would say a word or two in a low voice, which he would answer in the same cautious manner. Then they would part like strangers. Some of these men often reappeared again unexpectedly in the crowd close to Hugh, and, as they passed by, pressed his hand, or looked him sternly in the face; but they never spoke to him; nor he to them; no, not a word.

It was remarkable, too, that whenever they happened to stand where there was any press of people, and Hugh chanced to be looking downward, he was sure to see an arm stretched out—under his own perhaps, or perhaps across him—which thrust some paper into the hand or pocket of a bystander, and was so suddenly withdrawn that it was impossible to tell from whom it came; nor could he see in any face, on glancing quickly round, the least confusion or surprise. They often trod upon a paper like the one he carried in his breast, but his companion whispered him not to touch it or to take it up,—not even to look towards it,—so there they let them lie, and passed on.

When they had paraded the street and all the avenues of the building in this manner for near two hours, they turned away, and his friend asked him what he thought of what he had seen, and whether he was prepared for a good hot piece of work if it should come to that. “The hotter the better,” said Hugh; “I’m prepared for anything.”—“So am I,” said his friend, “and so are many of us;” and they shook hands upon it with a great oath, and with many terrible imprecations on the Papists.

As they were thirsty by this time, Dennis proposed that they should repair together to The Boot, where there was good company and strong liquor. Hugh yielding a ready assent, they bent their steps that way with no loss of time.

This Boot was a lone house of public entertainment, situated in the fields at the back of the Foundling Hospital; a very solitary spot at that period, and quite deserted after dark. The tavern stood at some distance from any high-road, and was approachable only by a dark and narrow lane; so that Hugh was much surprised to find several people drinking there, and great merriment going on. He was still more surprised to find among them almost every face that had caught his attention in the crowd; but his companion having whispered him, outside the door, that it was not considered good man-



ners at The Boot to appear at all curious about the company, he kept his own counsel, and made no show of recognition.

Before putting his lips to the liquor which was brought for them, Dennis drank in a loud voice the health of Lord George Gordon, President of the Great Protestant Association; which toast Hugh pledged likewise with corresponding enthusiasm. A fiddler who was present, and who appeared to act as the appointed minstrel of the company, forthwith struck up a Scotch reel; and that in tones so invigorating, that Hugh and his friend (who had both been drinking before) rose from their seats as by previous concert, and, to the great admiration of the assembled guests, performed an extemporaneous No-Popery Dance.

### CHAPTER XXXIX.

**T**HE applause which the performance of Hugh and his new friend elicited from the company at The Boot had not yet subsided, and the two dancers were still panting from their exertions, which had been of a rather extreme and violent character, when the party was reinforced by the arrival of some more guests, who, being a detachment of United Bulldogs, were received with very flattering marks of distinction and respect.

The leader of this small party—for, including himself, they were but three in number—was our old acquaintance, Mr. Tappertit, who seemed, physically speaking, to have grown smaller with years (particularly as to his legs, which were stupendously little), but who, in a moral point of view, in personal dignity and self-esteem, had swelled into a giant. Nor was it by any means difficult for the most unobservant person to detect this state of feeling in the quondam 'prentice, for it not only proclaimed itself impressively and beyond mistake in his majestic walk and kindling eye, but found a striking means of revelation in his turned-up nose, which scouted all things of earth with deep disdain, and sought communion with its kindred skies.

Mr. Tappertit, as chief or captain of the Bulldogs, was attended by his two lieutenants; one, the tall comrade of his younger life; the other, a 'Prentice Knight in days of yore—Mark Gilbert, bound in the olden time to Thomas Curzon of the Golden Fleece. These gentlemen, like himself, were now emancipated from their 'prentice thralldom, and served as journeymen; but

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they were, in humble emulation of his great example, bold and daring spirits, and aspired to a distinguished state in great political events. Hence their connection with the Protestant Association of England, sanctioned by the name of Lord George Gordon; and hence their present visit to The Boot.

"Gentlemen!" said Mr. Tappertit, taking off his hat as a great general might in addressing his troops. "Well met. My lord does me and you the honour to send his compliments per self."

"You've seen my lord too, have you?" said Dennis. "I see him this afternoon."

"My duty called me to the Lobby when our shop shut up; and I saw him there, sir," Mr. Tappertit replied, as he and his lieutenants took their seats. "How do you do?"

"Lively, master, lively," said the fellow. "Here's a new brother, regularly put down in black and white by Muster Gashford; a credit to the cause; one of the stick-at-nothing sort; one arter my own heart. D'ye see him? Has he got the looks of a man that'll do, do you think?" he cried, as he slapped Hugh on the back.

"Looks or no looks," said Hugh with a drunken flourish of his arm, "I'm the man you want. I hate the Papists, every one of 'em. They hate me, and I hate them. They do me all the harm they can, and I'll do them all the harm I can. Hurrah!"

"Was there ever," said Dennis, looking round the room, when the echo of his boisterous voice had died away; "was there ever such a game boy? Why, I mean to say, brothers, that if Muster Gashford had gone a hundred mile, and got together fifty men of the common run, they wouldn't have been worth this one."

The greater part of the company implicitly subscribed to this opinion, and testified their faith in Hugh by nods and looks of great significance. Mr. Tappertit sat and contemplated him for a long time in silence, as if he suspended his judgment; then drew a little nearer to him, and eyed him over more carefully; then went close up to him, and took him apart into a dark corner.

"I say," he began with a thoughtful brow, "haven't I seen you before?"

"It's like you may," said Hugh in his careless way. "I don't know; shouldn't wonder."

"No, but it's very easily settled," returned Sim. "Look at me. Did you ever see me before? You wouldn't be likely to forget it, you know, if you ever did. Look at me. Don't be afraid; I won't do you any harm. Take a good look—steady now."

The encouraging way in which Mr. Tappertit made this request, and coupled it with an assurance that he needn't be frightened, amused Hugh mightily—so much, indeed, that he saw nothing at all of the small man before him, through closing his eyes in a fit of hearty laughter, which shook his great broad sides until they ached again.

"Come!" said Mr. Tappertit, growing a little impatient under this disrespectful treatment. "Do you know me, feller?"

"Not I," cried Hugh. "Ha, ha, ha! Not I. But I should like to."

"And yet I'd have wagered a seven-shilling piece," said Mr. Tappertit, folding his arms, and confronting him with his legs wide apart and firmly planted on the ground, "that you once were hostler at the Maypole."

Hugh opened his eyes on hearing this, and looked at him in great surprise.

"—And so you were, too," said Mr. Tappertit, pushing him away with a condescending playfulness. "When did *my* eyes ever deceive—unless it was a young woman? Don't you know me now?"

"Why, it an't——" Hugh faltered.

"An't it?" said Mr. Tappertit. "Are you sure of that? You remember G. Varden, don't you?"

Certainly Hugh did, and he remembered D. Varden too; but that he didn't tell him.

"You remember coming down there, before I was out of my time, to ask after a vagabond that had bolted off, and left his disconsolate father a prey to the bitterest emotions, and all the rest of it—don't you?" said Mr. Tappertit.

"Of course I do!" cried Hugh. "And I saw you there."

"Saw me there!" said Mr. Tappertit. "Yes, I should think you did see me there. The place would be troubled to go on without me. Don't you remember my thinking you liked the vagabond, and on that account going to quarrel with you; and then, finding you detested him worse than poison, going to drink with you? Don't you remember that?"

"To be sure!" cried Hugh.

"Well! and are you in the same mind now?" said Mr. Tappertit.

"Yes!" roared Hugh.

"You speak like a man," said Mr. Tappertit, "and I'll shake hands with you." With these conciliatory expressions he suited the action to the word; and Hugh meeting his advances readily, they performed the ceremony with a show of great heartiness.

"I find," said Mr. Tappertit, looking round

on the assembled guests, "that brother What's-his-name and I are old acquaintance.—You never heard anything more of that rascal, I suppose, eh?"

"Not a syllable," replied Hugh. "I never want to. I don't believe I ever shall. He's dead long ago, I hope."

"It's to be hoped, for the sake of mankind in general and the happiness of society, that he is," said Mr. Tappertit, rubbing his palm upon his legs, and looking at it between-whiles. "Is your other hand, at all cleaner? Much the same. Well, I'll owe you another shake. We'll suppose it done, if you've no objection."

Hugh laughed again, and with such thorough abandonment to his mad humour, that his limbs seemed dislocated, and his whole frame in danger of tumbling to pieces; but Mr. Tappertit, so far from receiving this extreme merriment with any irritation, was pleased to regard it with the utmost favour, and even to join in it, so far as one of his gravity and station could, with any regard to that decency and decorum which men in high places are expected to maintain.

Mr. Tappertit did not stop here, as many public characters might have done, but, calling up his brace of lieutenants, introduced Hugh to them with high commendation; declaring him to be a man who, at such times as those in which they lived, could not be too much cherished. Further, he did him the honour to remark, that he would be an acquisition of which even the United Bulldogs might be proud; and finding, upon sounding him, that he was quite ready and willing to enter the society (for he was not at all particular, and would have leagued himself that night with anything, or anybody, for any purpose whatsoever), caused the necessary preliminaries to be gone into upon the spot. This tribute to his great merit delighted no man more than Mr. Dennis, as he himself proclaimed with several rare and surprising oaths; and, indeed, it gave unmingled satisfaction to the whole assembly.

"Make anything you like of me!" cried Hugh, flourishing the can he had emptied more than once. "Put me on any duty you please. I'm your man. I'll do it. Here's my captain—here's my leader. Ha, ha, ha! Let him give me the word of command, and I'll fight the whole Parliament House single-handed, or set a lighted torch to the King's Throne itself!" With that, he smote Mr. Tappertit on the back with such violence that his little body seemed to shrink into a mere nothing; and roared again until the very foundlings near at hand were startled in their beds.

In fact, a sense of something whimsical in their



companionship seemed to have taken entire possession of his rude brain. The bare fact of being patronised by a great man whom he could have crushed with one hand, appeared in his eyes so eccentric and humorous, that a kind of ferocious merriment gained the mastery over him, and quite subdued his brutal nature. He roared and roared again; toasted Mr. Tappertit a hundred times; declared himself a Bulldog to the core; and vowed to be faithful to him to the last drop of blood in his veins.

All these compliments Mr. Tappertit received as matters of course—flattering enough in their way, but entirely attributable to his vast superiority. His dignified self-possession only delighted Hugh the more; and, in a word, this giant and dwarf struck up a friendship which bade fair to be of long continuance, as the one held it to be his right to command, and the other considered it an exquisite pleasantry to obey. Nor was Hugh by any means a passive follower, who scrupled to act without precise and definite orders; for when Mr. Tappertit mounted on an empty cask which stood by way of rostrum in the room, and volunteered a speech upon the alarming crisis then at hand, he placed himself beside the orator, and though he grinned from ear to ear at every word he said, threw out such expressive hints to scoffers in the management of his cudgel, that those who were at first the most disposed to interrupt, became remarkably attentive, and were the loudest in their approbation.

It was not all noise and jest, however, at The Boot, nor were the whole party listeners to the speech. There were some men at the other end of the room (which was a long, low-roofed chamber) in earnest conversation all the time; and when any of this group went out, fresh people were sure to come in soon afterwards, and sit down in their places, as though the others had relieved them on some watch or duty; which it was pretty clear they did, for these changes took place by the clock, at intervals of half an hour. These persons whispered very much among themselves, and kept aloof, and often looked round, as jealous of their speech being overheard; some two or three among them entered in books what seemed to be reports from the others; when they were not thus employed, one of them would turn to the newspapers which were strewn upon the table, and from the *St. James's Chronicle*, the *Herald*, *Chronicle*, or *Public Advertiser*, would read to the rest, in a low voice, some passage having reference to the topic in which they were all so deeply interested. But the great attraction was a pamphlet called *The*

*Thunderer*, which espoused their own opinions, and was supposed at that time to emanate directly from the Association. This was always in request; and whether read aloud to an eager knot of listeners, or by some solitary man, was certain to be followed by stormy talking and excited looks.

In the midst of all his merriment and admiration of his captain, Hugh was made sensible, by these and other tokens, of the presence of an air of mystery, akin to that which had so much impressed him out of doors. It was impossible to discard a sense that something serious was going on, and that, under the noisy revel of the public-house, there lurked unseen and dangerous matter. Little affected by this, however, he was perfectly satisfied with his quarters, and would have remained there till morning, but that his conductor rose soon after midnight to go home; Mr. Tappertit following his example, left him no excuse to stay. So they all three left the house together: roaring a No-Popery song until the fields resounded with the dismal noise.

"Cheer up, captain!" cried Hugh, when they had roared themselves out of breath. "Another stave!"

Mr. Tappertit, nothing loath, began again; and so the three went staggering on, arm-in-arm, shouting like madmen, and defying the watch with great valour. Indeed, this did not require any unusual bravery or boldness, as the watchmen of that time, being selected for the office on account of excessive age and extraordinary infirmity, had a custom of shutting themselves up tight in their boxes on the first symptoms of disturbance, and remaining there until they disappeared. In these proceedings, Mr. Dennis, who had a gruff voice and lungs of considerable power, distinguished himself very much, and acquired great credit with his two companions.

"What a queer fellow you are!" said Mr. Tappertit. "You're so precious sly and close. Why don't you ever tell what trade you're of?"

"Answer the captain instantly," cried Hugh, beating his hat down on his head. "Why don't you ever tell what trade you're of?"

"I'm of as gen-teel a calling, brother, as any man in England—as light a business as any gentleman could desire."

"Was you 'prenticed to it?" asked Mr. Tappertit.

"No. Natural genius," said Mr. Dennis. "No 'prenticing. It come by natur'. Muster Gashford knows my calling. Look at that hand of mine—many and many a job that hand has done with a neatness and dex-terity never known afore. When I look at that hand," said Mr.

Dennis, shaking it in the air, "and remember the helegant bits of work it has turned off, I feel quite mollencholy to think it should ever grow old and feeble. But sich is life!"

He heaved a deep sigh as he indulged in these reflections, and putting his fingers with an absent air on Hugh's throat, and particularly under his left ear, as if he were studying the anatomical development of that part of his frame, shook his head in a despondent manner, and actually shed tears.

"You're a kind of artist, I suppose—eh?" said Mr. Tappetit.

"Yes," rejoined Dennis; "yes—I may call myself a artist—a fancy workman—art improves natur'—that's my motto."

"And what do you call this?" said Mr. Tappetit, taking his stick out of his hand.

"That's my portrait atop," Dennis replied. "D'ye think it's like?"

"Why, it's a little too handsome," said Mr. Tappetit. "Who did it? You?"



A NICE TRIO.

"I!" repeated Dennis, gazing fondly on his image. "I wish I had the talent. That was carved by a friend of mine, as is now no more. The very day afore he died, he cut that with his pocket-knife from memory! 'I'll die game,' says my friend, 'and my last moments shall be devoted to making Dennis's picter.' That's it."

"That was a queer fancy, wasn't it?" said Mr. Tappetit.

"It *was* a queer fancy," rejoined the other, breathing on his fictitious nose, and polishing it

with the cuff of his coat, "but he was a queer subject altogether—a kind of gipsy—one of the finest, stand-up men you ever see. Ah! He told me some things that would startle you a bit, did that friend of mine, on the morning when he died."

"You were with him at the time, were you?" said Mr. Tappetit.

"Yes," he answered with a curious look, "I was there. Oh yes, certainly, I was there. He wouldn't have gone off half as comfortable with-



out me. I had been with three or four of his family under the same circumstances. They were all fine fellows."

"They must have been fond of you," remarked Mr. Tappetit, looking at him sideways.

"I don't know that they was exactly fond of me," said Dennis with a little hesitation, "but they all had me near 'em when they departed. I come in for their wardrobes too. This very handkercher that you see round my neck belonged to him that I've been speaking of—him as did that likeness."

Mr. Tappetit glanced at the article referred to, and appeared to think that the deceased's ideas of dress were of a peculiar and by no means an expensive kind. He made no remark upon the point, however, and suffered his mysterious companion to proceed without interruption.

"These smalls," said Dennis, rubbing his legs; "these very smalls—they belonged to a friend of mine that's left off sich encumbrances for ever: this coat, too—I've often walked behind this coat in the streets, and wondered whether it would ever come to me: this pair of shoes have danced a hornpipe for another man, afore my eyes, full half-a-dozen times at least: and as to my hat," he said, taking it off, and whirling it round upon his fist—"Lord! I've seen this hat go up Holborn on the box of a hackney coach—ah, many and many a day!"

"You don't mean to say their old wearers are *all* dead, I hope?" said Mr. Tappetit, falling a little distance from him as he spoke.

"Every one of 'em," replied Dennis. "Every man Jack!"

There was something so very ghastly in this circumstance, and it appeared to account, in such a very strange and dismal manner, for his faded dress—which, in this new aspect, seemed discoloured by the earth from graves—that Mr. Tappetit abruptly found he was going another way, and, stopping short, bade him good night with the utmost heartiness. As they happened to be near the Old Bailey, and Mr. Dennis knew there were turnkeys in the lodge with whom he could pass the night, and discuss professional subjects of common interest among them before a rousing fire, and over a social glass, he separated from his companions without any great regret, and warmly shaking hands with Hugh, and making an early appointment for their meeting at The Boot, left them to pursue their road.

"That's a strange sort of man," said Mr. Tappetit, watching the hackney coachman's hat as it went bobbing down the street. "I don't

know what to make of him. Why can't he have his smalls made to order, or wear live clothes at any rate?"

"He's a lucky man, captain," cried Hugh. "I should like to have such friends as his."

"I hope he don't get 'em to make their wills, and then knock 'em on the head," said Mr. Tappetit, musing. "But come. The United B's expect me. On!—What's the matter?"

"I quite forgot," said Hugh, who had started at the striking of a neighbouring clock. "I have somebody to see to-night—I must turn back directly. The drinking and singing put it out of my head. It's well I remembered it!"

Mr. Tappetit looked at him as though he were about to give utterance to some very majestic sentiments in reference to this act of desertion, but as it was clear, from Hugh's hasty manner, that the engagement was one of a pressing nature, he graciously forbore, and gave him his permission to depart immediately, which Hugh acknowledged with a roar of laughter.

"Good night, captain!" he cried. "I am yours to the death, remember!"

"Farewell!" said Mr. Tappetit, waving his hand. "Be bold and vigilant!"

"No Popery, captain!" roared Hugh.

"England in blood first!" cried his desperate leader. Whereat Hugh cheered and laughed, and ran off like a greyhound.

"That man will prove a credit to my corps," said Simon, turning thoughtfully upon his heel. "And let me see. In an altered state of society—which must ensue if we break out and are victorious—when the locksmith's child is mine, Miggs must be got rid of somehow, or she'll poison the tea-kettle one evening when I'm out. He might marry Miggs if he was drunk enough. It shall be done. I'll make a note of it."

## CHAPTER XL.



LITTLE thinking of the plan for his happy settlement in life which had suggested itself to the teeming brain of his provident commander, Hugh made no pause until St. Dunstan's giants struck the hour above him, when he worked the handle of a pump which stood hard by with great vigour, and thrusting his head under the spout, let the water gush upon him until a little stream ran down from every uncombed hair, and he was wet to the waist. Considerably refreshed by this ablution, both in mind and body, and almost sobered

for-the time, he dried himself as he best could; then crossed the road, and plied the knocker of the Middle Temple gate.

The night porter looked through a small grating in the portal with a surly eye, and cried "Halloa!" which greeting Hugh returned in kind, and bade him open quickly.

"We don't sell beer here," cried the man.

"What else do you want?"

"To come in," Hugh replied, with a kick at the door.

"Where to go to?"

"Paper Buildings."

"Whose chambers?"

"Sir John Chester's." Each of which answers he emphasised with another kick.

After a little growling on the other side, the gate was opened, and he passed in: undergoing a close inspection from the porter as he did so.

"*You* wanting Sir John at this time of night!" said the man.

"Ay!" said Hugh. "I! What of that?"

"Why, I must go with you, and see that you do, for I don't believe it."

"Come along, then."

Eyeing him with suspicious looks, the man, with key and lantern, walked on at his side, and attended him to Sir John Chester's door, at which Hugh gave one knock, that echoed through the dark staircase like a ghostly summons, and made the dull light tremble in the drowsy lamp.

"Do you think he wants me now?" said Hugh.

Before the man had time to answer, a foot-step was heard within, a light appeared, and Sir John, in his dressing-gown and slippers, opened the door.

"I ask your pardon, Sir John," said the porter, pulling off his hat. "Here's a young man says he wants to speak to you. It's late for strangers. I thought it best to see that all was right."

"Aha!" cried Sir John, raising his eyebrows.

"It's you, messenger, is it? Go in. Quite right, friend; I commend your prudence highly. Thank you. God bless you. Good night."

To be commended, thanked, God-blessed, and bade good night by one who carried "Sir" before his name, and wrote himself M.P. to boot, was something for a porter. He withdrew with much humility and reverence. Sir John followed his late visitor into the dressing-room, and sitting in his easy-chair before the fire, and moving it so that he could see him as he stood, hat in hand, beside the door, looked at him from head to foot.

The old face, calm and pleasant as ever; the

complexion, quite juvenile in its bloom and clearness; the same smile; the wonted precision and elegance of dress: the white, well-ordered teeth; the delicate hands; the composed and quiet manner; everything as it used to be: no marks of age or passion, envy, hate, or discontent: all unruffled and serene, and quite delightful to behold.

He wrote himself M.P.—but how? Why, thus. It was a proud family—more proud, indeed, than wealthy. He had stood in danger of arrest; of bailiffs, and a gaol—a vulgar gaol, to which the common people with small incomes went. Gentlemen of ancient houses have no privilege of exemption from such cruel laws—unless they are of one great house, and then they have. A proud man of his stock and kindred had the means of sending him there. He offered—not indeed to pay his debts, but to let him sit for a close borough until his own son came of age, which, if he lived, would come to pass in twenty years. It was quite as good as an Insolvent Act, and infinitely more genteel. So Sir John Chester was a member of Parliament.

But how Sir John? Nothing so simple, or so easy. One touch with a sword of state, and the transformation is effected. John Chester, Esquire, M.P., attended court—went up with an address—headed a deputation. Such elegance of manner, so many graces of deportment, such powers of conversation, could never pass unnoticed. Mr. was too common for such merit. A man so gentlemanly should have been—but Fortune is capricious—born a Duke: just as some dukes should have been born labourers. He caught the fancy of the king, knelt down a grub, and rose a butterfly. John Chester, Esquire, was knighted, and became Sir John.

"I thought when you left me this evening, my esteemed acquaintance," said Sir John after a pretty long silence, "that you intended to return with all dispatch."

"So I did, master."

"And so you have?" he retorted, glancing at his watch. "Is that what you would say?"

Instead of replying, Hugh changed the leg on which he leant, shuffled his cap from one hand to the other, looked at the ground, the wall, the ceiling, and finally at Sir John himself; before whose pleasant face he lowered his eyes again, and fixed them on the floor.

"And how have you been employing yourself in the meanwhile?" quoth Sir John, lazily crossing his legs. "Where have you been? what harm have you been doing?"

"No harm at all, master," growled Hugh with humility. "I have only done as you ordered."



"As I *what?*" returned Sir John.

"Well, then," said Hugh uneasily, "as you advised, or said I ought, or said I might, or said that you would do, if you was me. Don't be so hard upon me, master."

Something like an expression of triumph in the perfect control he had established over this rough instrument appeared in the knight's face for an instant; but it vanished directly as he said—paring his nails while speaking:

"When you said I ordered you, my good fellow, you imply that I directed you to do something for me—something I wanted done—something for my own ends and purposes—you see? Now, I am sure I needn't enlarge upon the extreme absurdity of such an idea, however unintentional; so, please"—and here he turned his eyes upon him—"to be more guarded. Will you?"

"I meant to give you no offence," said Hugh. "I don't know what to say. You catch me up so very short."

"You will be caught up much shorter, my good friend—ininitely shorter—one of these days, depend upon it," replied his patron calmly. "By-the-bye, instead of wondering why you have been so long, my wonder should be why you came at all. Why did you?"

"You know, master," said Hugh, "that I couldn't read the bill I found, and that, supposing it to be something particular from the way it was wrapped up, I brought it here."

"And could you ask no one else to read it, Bruin?" said Sir John.

"No one that I could trust with secrets, master. Since Barnaby Rudge was lost sight of for good and all—and that's five year ago—I haven't talked with any one but you."

"You have done me honour, I am sure."

"I have come to and fro, master, all through that time, when there was anything to tell, because I knew that you'd be angry with me if I stayed away," said Hugh, blurring the words out, after an embarrassed silence; "and because I wished to please you, if I could, and not to have you go against me. There. That's the true reason why I came to-night. You know that, master, I am sure."

"You are a specious fellow," returned Sir John, fixing his eyes upon him, "and carry two faces under your hood, as well as the best. Didn't you give me in this room, this evening, any other reason; no dislike of anybody who has slighted you, lately, on all occasions, abused you, treated you with rudeness; acted towards you more as if you were a mongrel dog than a man like himself?"

"To be sure I did!" cried Hugh, his passion rising, as the other meant it should; "and I say it all over now again. I'd do anything to have some revenge on him—anything. And when you told me that he and all the Catholics would suffer from those who joined together under that handbill, I said I'd make one of 'em, if their master was the devil himself. I *am* one of 'em. See whether I am as good as my word, and turn out to be among the foremost, or no. I mayn't have much head, master, but I've head enough to remember those that use me ill. You shall see, and so shall he, and so shall hundreds more, how my spirit backs me when the time comes. My bark is nothing to my bite. Some that I know had better have a wild lion among 'em than me, when I am fairly loose—they had!"

The knight looked at him with a smile of far deeper meaning than ordinary; and pointing to the old cupboard, followed him with his eyes while he filled and drank a glass of liquor: and smiled when his back was turned, with deeper meaning yet.

"You are in a blustering mood, my friend," he said when Hugh confronted him again.

"Not I, master!" cried Hugh. "I don't say half I mean. I can't. I haven't got the gift. There are talkers enough among us; I'll be one of the doers."

"Oh! you have joined those fellows then?" said Sir John with an air of most profound indifference.

"Yes. I went up to the house you told me of, and got put down upon the muster. There was another man there named Dennis—"

"Dennis, eh?" cried Sir John, laughing. "Ay, ay! a pleasant fellow, I believe?"

"A roaring dog, master—one after my own heart—hot upon the matter too—red-hot."

"So I have heard," replied Sir John carelessly.

"You don't happen to know his trade, do you?"

"He wouldn't say," cried Hugh. "He keeps it secret."

"Ha, ha!" laughed Sir John. "A strange fancy—a weakness with some persons—you'll know it one day, I dare swear."

"We're intimate already," said Hugh.

"Quite natural! And have been drinking together, eh?" pursued Sir John. "Did you say what place you went to in company, when you left Lord George's?"

Hugh had not said, or thought of saying, but he told him; and this inquiry being followed by a long train of questions, he related all that had passed both in and out of doors, the kind of people he had seen, their numbers, state of

feeling, mode of conversation, apparent expectations and intentions. His questioning was so artfully contrived, that he seemed even in his own eyes to volunteer all this information rather than to have it wrested from him; and he was brought to this state of feeling so naturally, that when Mr. Chester yawned at length, and declared himself quite wearied out, he made a rough kind of excuse for having talked so much.

"There—get you gone," said Sir John, holding the door open in his hand. "You have made a pretty evening's work. I told you not to do this. You may get into trouble. You'll have an opportunity of revenging yourself on your proud friend Haredale, though, and for that you'd hazard anything, I suppose?"

"I would," retorted Hugh, stopping in his passage out, and looking back; "but what do I risk? What do I stand a chance of losing, master? Friends, home? A fig for 'em all; I have none; they are nothing to me. Give me a good scuffle; let me pay off old scores in a bold riot where there are men to stand by me; and then use me as you like—it don't matter much to me what the end is!"

"What have you done with that paper?" said Sir John.

"I have it here, master."

"Drop it again as you go along; it's as well not to keep such things about you."

Hugh nodded, and touching his cap with an air of as much respect as he could summon up, departed.

Sir John, fastening the doors behind him, went back to his dressing-room, and sat down once again before the fire, at which he gazed for a long time, in earnest meditation.

"This happens fortunately," he said, breaking into a smile, "and promises well. Let me see. My relative and I, who are the most Protestant fellows in the world, give our worst wishes to the Roman Catholic cause; and to Saville, who introduces their bill, I have a personal objection besides; but as each of us has himself for the first article in his creed, we cannot commit ourselves by joining with a very extravagant madman, such as this Gordon most undoubtedly is. Now, really, to foment his disturbances in secret, through the medium of such a very apt instrument as my savage friend here, may further our real ends; and to express at all becoming seasons, in moderate and polite terms, a disapprobation of his proceedings, though we agree with him in principle, will certainly be to gain a character for honesty and uprightness of purpose, which cannot fail to do us infinite service, and to raise us into some importance. Good! So much

for public grounds. As to private considerations, I confess that if these vagabonds *would* make some riotous demonstration (which does not appear impossible), and *would* inflict some little chastisement on Haredale as a not inactive man among his sect, it would be extremely agreeable to my feelings, and would amuse me beyond measure. Good again! Perhaps better!"

When he came to this point, he took a pinch of snuff; then beginning slowly to undress, he resumed his meditations by saying with a smile:

"I fear, I *do* fear exceedingly, that my friend is following fast in the footsteps of his mother. His intimacy with Mr. Dennis is very ominous. But I have no doubt he must have come to that end anyway. If I lend him a helping hand, the only difference is, that he may, upon the whole, possibly drink a few gallons, or puncheons, or hogsheads, less in this life than he otherwise would. It's no business of mine. It's a matter of very small importance!"

So he took another pinch of snuff, and went to bed.

## CHAPTER XLI.

**F**ROM the workshop of the Golden Key there issued forth a tinkling sound, so merry and good-humoured, that it suggested the idea of some one working blithely, and made quite pleasant music. No man who hampered on at a dull monotonous duty could have brought such cheerful notes from steel and iron; none but a chirping, healthy, honest-hearted fellow, who made the best of everything, and felt kindly towards everybody, could have done it for an instant. He might have been a coppersmith, and still been musical. If he had sat in a jolting waggon, full of rods of iron, it seemed as if he would have brought some harmony out of it.

Tink, tink, tink—clear as a silver bell, and audible at every pause of the streets' harsher noises, as though it said, "I don't care; nothing puts me out; I am resolved to be happy." Women scolded, children squalled, heavy carts went rumbling by, horrible cries proceeded from the lungs of hawkers; still it struck in again, no higher, no lower, no louder, no softer; not thrusting itself on people's notice a bit the more for having been outdone by louder sounds—tink, tink, tink, tink.

It was a perfect embodiment of the still small voice, free from all cold, hoarseness, huskiness, or unhealthiness of any kind; foot-passengers



slackened their pace, and were disposed to linger near it; neighbours who had got up splenetic that morning, felt good-humour stealing on them as they heard it, and by degrees became quite sprightly; mothers danced their babies to its ringing; still the same magical tink, tink, tink,

came gaily from the workshop of the Golden Key.

Who but the locksmith could have made such music? A gleam of sun shining through the unsashed window, and chequering the dark workshop with a broad patch of light, fell full upon



GABRIEL VARDEN.

him, as though attracted by his sunny heart. There he stood working at his anvil, his face all radiant with exercise and gladness, his sleeves turned up, his wig pushed off his shining forehead—the easiest, freest, happiest man in all the world. Beside him sat a sleek cat, purring and

winking in the light, and falling every now and then into an idle doze, as from excess of comfort. Toby looked on from a tall bench hard by; one beaming smile, from his broad nut-brown face down to the slack-baked buckles in his shoes. The very locks that hung around had something

joyal in their rust, and seemed, like gouty gentlemen of hearty natures, disposed to joke on their infirmities. There was nothing surly or severe in the whole scene. It seemed impossible that any one of the innumerable keys could fit a churlish strong-box or a prison door. Cellars of beer and wine, rooms where there were fires, books, gossip, and cheering laughter—these were their proper sphere of action. Places of distrust and cruelty, and restraint, they would have left quadruple-locked for ever.

Tink, tink, tink. The locksmith paused at last, and wiped his brow. The silence roused the cat, who, jumping softly down, crept to the door, and watched with tiger eyes a bird-cage in an opposite window. Gabriel lifted Toby to his mouth, and took a hearty draught.

Then, as he stood upright, with his head flung back, and his portly chest thrown out, you would have seen that Gabriel's lower man was clothed in military gear. Glancing at the wall beyond, there might have been espied, hanging on their several pegs, a cap and feather, broadsword, sash, and coat of scarlet; which any man learned in such matters would have known, from their make and pattern, to be the uniform of a sergeant in the Royal East London Volunteers.

As the locksmith put his mug down, empty, on the bench, whence it had smiled on him before, he glanced at these articles with a laughing eye, and looking at them with his head a little on one side, as though he would get them all into a focus, said, leaning on his hammer:

"Time was, now, I remember, when I was like to run mad with the desire to wear a coat of that colour. If any one (except my father) had called me a fool for my pains, how I should have fired and fumed! But what a fool I must have been, sure-ly!"

"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Varden, who had entered unobserved. "A fool indeed. A man at your time of life, Varden, should know better now."

"Why, what a ridiculous woman you are, Martha!" said the locksmith, turning round with a smile.

"Certainly," replied Mrs. V. with great demureness. "Of course I am. I know that, Varden. Thank you."

"I mean——" began the locksmith.

"Yes," said his wife, "I know what you mean. You speak quite plain enough to be understood, Varden. It's very kind of you to adapt yourself to my capacity, I am sure."

"Tut, tut, Martha," rejoined the locksmith; "don't take offence at nothing. I mean, how strange it is of you to run down volunteering, when it's done to defend you and all the other

women, and our own fireside and everybody else's, in case of need!"

"It's unchristian," cried Mrs. Varden, shaking her head.

"Unchristian!" said the locksmith. "Why, what the devil——"

Mrs. Varden looked at the ceiling, as in expectation that the consequence of this profanity would be the immediate descent of the four-post bedstead on the second floor, together with the best sitting-room on the first; but no visible judgment occurring, she heaved a deep sigh, and begged her husband, in a tone of resignation, to go on, and by all means to blaspheme as much as possible, because he knew she liked it.

The locksmith did for a moment seem disposed to gratify her, but he gave a great gulp, and mildly rejoined:

"I was going to say, what on earth do you call it unchristian for? Which would be most unchristian, Martha—to sit quietly down and let our houses be sacked by a foreign army, or to turn out like men and drive 'em off? Shouldn't I be a nice sort of a Christian if I crept into a corner of my own chimney, and looked on while a parcel of whiskered savages bore off Dolly—or you?"

When he said "or you," Mrs. Varden, despite herself, relaxed into a smile. There was something complimentary in the idea. "In such a state of things as that, indeed——" she simpered.

"As that!" repeated the locksmith. "Well, that would be the state of things directly. Even Miggs would go. Some black tambourine-player, with a great turban on, would be bearing *her* off, and, unless the tambourine-player was proof against kicking and scratching, it's my belief he'd have the worst of it. Ha, ha, ha! I'd forgive the tambourine-player. I wouldn't have him interfered with on any account, poor fellow." And here the locksmith laughed again so heartily, that tears came into his eyes—much to Mrs. Varden's indignation, who thought the capture of so sound a Protestant and estimable a private character as Miggs, by a pagan negro, a circumstance too shocking and awful for contemplation.

The picture Gabriel had drawn, indeed, threatened serious consequences, and would indubitably have led to them, but luckily at that moment a light footstep crossed the threshold, and Dolly, running in, threw her arms round her old father's neck and hugged him tight.

"Here she is at last!" cried Gabriel. "And how well you look, Doll, and how late you are, my darling!"

How well she looked? Well? Why, if he



had exhausted every laudatory adjective in the dictionary, it wouldn't have been praise enough. When and where was there ever such a plump, roguish, comely, bright-eyed, enticing, bewitching, captivating, maddening little puss in all this world as Dolly? What was the Dolly of five years ago to the Dolly of that day? How many coachmakers, saddlers, cabinet-makers, and professors of other useful arts, had deserted their fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, and, most of all, their cousins, for the love of her! How many unknown gentlemen—supposed to be of mighty fortunes, if not titles—had waited round the corner after dark, and tempted Miggs the incorruptible with golden guineas, to deliver offers of marriage folded up in love-letters! How many disconsolate fathers and substantial tradesmen had waited on the locksmith for the same purpose, with dismal tales of how their sons had lost their appetites, and taken to shut themselves up in dark bedrooms, and wandering in desolate suburbs with pale faces, and all because of Dolly Varden's loveliness and cruelty! How many young men, in all previous times of unprecedented steadiness, had turned suddenly wild and wicked for the same reason, and, in an ecstasy of unrequited love, taken to wrench off door-knockers, and invert the boxes of rheumatic watchmen! How had she recruited the king's service, both by sea and land, through rendering desperate his loving subjects between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five! How many young ladies had publicly professed, with tears in their eyes, that for their tastes she was much too short, too tall, too bold, too cold, too stout, too thin, too fair, too dark—too everything but handsome! How many old ladies, taking counsel together, had thanked Heaven their daughters were not like her, and had hoped she might come to no harm, and had thought she would come to no good, and had wondered what people saw in her, and had arrived at the conclusion that she was "going off" in her looks, or had never come on in them, and that she was a thorough imposition and a popular mistake!

And yet here was this same Dolly Varden, so whimsical and hard to please that she was Dolly Varden still, all smiles and dimples, and pleasant looks, and caring no more for the fifty or sixty young fellows, who at that very moment were breaking their hearts to marry her, than if so many oysters had been crossed in love and opened afterwards.

Dolly hugged her father, as has been already stated, and having hugged her mother also, accompanied both into the little parlour, where

the cloth was already laid for dinner, and where Miss Miggs—a trifle more rigid and bony than of yore—received her with a sort of hysterical gasp, intended for a smile. Into the hands of that young virgin she delivered her bonnet and walking dress (all of a dreadful, artful, and designing kind), and then said with a laugh, which rivalled the locksmith's music, "How glad I always am to be at home again!"

"And how glad we always are, Doll," said her father, putting back the dark hair from her sparkling eyes, "to have you at home! Give me a kiss."

If there had been anybody of the male kind there to see her do it—but there was not—it was a mercy.

"I don't like your being at the Warren," said the locksmith; "I can't bear to have you out of my sight. And what is the news over yonder, Doll?"

"What news there is, I think you know already," replied his daughter. "I am sure you do, though."

"Ay?" cried the locksmith. "What's that?"

"Come, come," said Dolly, "you know very well. I want you to tell me why Mr. Haredale—oh, how gruff he is again, to be sure!—has been away from home for some days past, and why he is travelling about (we know he *is* travelling, because of his letters) without telling his own niece why or wherefore."

"Miss Emma doesn't want to know, I'll swear," returned the locksmith.

"I don't know that," said Dolly; "but *I* do, at any rate. Do tell me. Why is he so secret, and what is this ghost story, which nobody is to tell Miss Emma, and which seems to be mixed up with his going away? Now I see you know by your colouring so."

"What the story means, or is, or has to do with it, I know no more than you, my dear," returned the locksmith, "except that it's some foolish fear of little Solomon's—which has, indeed, no meaning in it, I suppose. As to Mr. Haredale's journey, he goes, as I believe—"

"Yes," said Dolly.

"As I believe," resumed the locksmith, pinching her cheek, "on business, Doll. What it may be is quite another matter. Read Blue Beard, and don't be too curious, pet; it's no business of yours or mine, depend upon that; and here's dinner, which is much more to the purpose."

Dolly might have remonstrated against this summary dismissal of the subject, notwithstanding the appearance of dinner, but at the mention of Blue Beard Mrs. Varden interposed, protest-

ing she could not find it in her conscience to sit tamely by, and hear her child recommended to peruse the adventures of a Turk and Mussulman—far less of a fabulous Turk, which she considered that potentate to be. She held that in such stirring and tremendous times as those in which they lived, it would be much more to the purpose if Dolly became a regular subscriber to *The Thunderer*, where she would have an opportunity of reading Lord George Gordon's speeches word for word, which would be a greater comfort and solace to her than a hundred and fifty Blue Beards ever could impart. She appealed, in support of this proposition, to Miss Miggs, then in waiting, who said that indeed the peace of mind she had derived from the perusal of that paper generally, but especially of one article of the very last week as ever was, entitled "Great Britain drenched in gore," exceeded all belief; the same composition, she added, had also wrought such a comforting effect on the mind of a married sister of hers, then resident at Golden Lion Court, number twenty-sivin, second bell-handle on the right-hand door-post, that, being in a delicate state of health, and, in fact, expecting an addition to her family, she had been seized with fits directly after its perusal, and had raved of the inquisition ever since; to the great improvement of her husband and friends. Miss Miggs went on to say that she would recommend all those whose hearts were hardened to hear Lord George themselves, whom she commended first, in respect of his steady Protestantism, then of his oratory, then of his eyes, then of his nose, then of his legs, and lastly of his figure generally, which she looked upon as fit for any statue, prince, or angel, to which sentiment Mrs. Varden fully subscribed.

Mrs. Varden having cut in, looked at a box upon the mantel-shelf, painted in imitation of a very red brick dwelling-house, with a yellow roof; having at top a real chimney, down which voluntary subscribers dropped their silver, gold, or pence into the parlour; and on the door the counterfeit presentment of a brass plate, whereon was legibly inscribed "Protestant Association?"—and looking at it, said that it was to her a source of poignant misery to think that Varden never had, of all his substance, dropped anything into that temple, save once in secret—as she afterwards discovered—two fragments of tobacco-pipe, which she hoped would not be put down to his last account. That Dolly, she was grieved to say, was no less backward in her contributions, better loving, as it seemed, to purchase ribbons and such gauds than to en-

courage the great cause, then in such heavy tribulation; and that she did entreat her (her father she much feared could not be moved) not to despise, but imitate, the bright example of Miss Miggs, who flung her wages, as it were, into the very countenance of the Pope, and bruised his features with her quarter's money.

"Oh, mim," said Miggs, "don't relude to that. I had no intentions, mim, that nobody should know. Such sacrifices as I can make are quite a widow's mite. It's all I have," cried Miggs with a great burst of tears—for with her they never came on by degrees—"but it's made up to me in other ways; it's well made up."

This was quite true, though not perhaps in the sense that Miggs intended. As she never failed to keep her self-denial full in Mrs. Varden's view, it drew forth so many gifts of caps and gowns and other articles of dress, that upon the whole the red-brick house was perhaps the best investment for her small capital she could possibly have hit upon; returning her interest at the rate of seven or eight per cent. in money, and fifty at least in personal repute and credit.

"You needn't cry, Miggs," said Mrs. Varden, herself in tears; "you needn't be ashamed of it, though your poor mistress *is* on the same side."

Miggs howled at this remark in a peculiarly dismal way, and said she knowed that master hated her. That it was a dreadful thing to live in families and have dislikes, and not give satisfactions. That to make divisions was a thing she could not abear to think of, neither could her feelings let her do it. That if it was master's wishes as she and him should part, it was best they should part, and she hoped he might be the happier for it, and always wishes him well, and that he might find somebody as would meet his dispositions. It would be a hard trial, she said, to part from such a missis, but she could meet any suffering when her conscience told her she was in the rights, and therefore she was willing even to go that lengths. She did not think, she added, that she could long survive the separations, but as she was hated, and looked upon unpleasant, perhaps her dying as soon as possible would be the best endings for all parties. With this affecting conclusion, Miss Miggs shed more tears, and sobbed abundantly.

"Can you bear this, Varden?" said his wife in a solemn voice, laying down her knife and fork.

"Why, not very well, my dear," rejoined the locksmith, "but I try to keep my temper."

"Don't let there be words on my account,



mim," sobbed Miggs. "It's much the best that we should part. I wouldn't stay—oh, gracious me!—and make dissensions, not for a annual gold mine, and found in tea and sugar."

Lest the reader should be at any loss to discover the cause of Miss Miggs's deep emotion, it may be whispered apart that, happening to be listening, as her custom sometimes was, when Gabriel and his wife conversed together, she had heard the locksmith's joke relative to the foreign black who played the tambourine, and bursting with the spiteful feelings which the taunt awoke in her fair breast, exploded in the manner we have witnessed. Matters having now arrived at a crisis, the locksmith, as usual, and for the sake of peace and quietness, gave in.

"What are you crying for, girl?" he said. "What's the matter with you? What are you talking about hatred for? I don't hate you; I don't hate anybody. Dry your eyes and make yourself agreeable, in Heaven's name, and let us all be happy while we can."

The allied powers deeming it good generalship to consider this a sufficient apology on the part of the enemy, and confession of having been in the wrong, did dry their eyes and take it in good part. Miss Miggs observed that she bore no malice, no, not to her greatest foe, whom she rather loved the more, indeed, the greater persecution she sustained. Mrs. Varden approved of this meek and forgiving spirit in high terms, and incidentally declared, as a closing article of agreement, that Dolly should accompany her to the Clerkenwell branch of the Association that very night. This was an extraordinary instance of her great prudence and policy; having had this end in view from the first, and entertaining a secret misgiving that the locksmith (who was bold when Dolly was in question) would object, she had backed Miss Miggs up to this point, in order that she might have him at a disadvantage. The manœuvre succeeded so well that Gabriel only made a wry face, and, with the warning he had just had fresh in his mind, did not dare to say one word.

The difference ended, therefore, in Miggs being presented with a gown by Mrs. Varden and half-a-crown by Dolly, as if she had eminently distinguished herself in the paths of morality and goodness. Mrs. V., according to custom, expressed her hope that Varden would take a lesson from what had passed, and learn more generous conduct for the time to come; and the dinner being now cold, and nobody's appetite very much improved by what had passed, they went on with it, as Mrs. Varden said, "like Christians."

As there was to be a grand parade of the Royal East London Volunteers that afternoon, the locksmith did no more work; but sat down comfortably with his pipe in his mouth, and his arm round his pretty daughter's waist, looking lovingly on Mrs. V. from time to time, and exhibiting, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot, one smiling surface of good-humour. And to be sure, when it was time to dress him in his regimentals, and Dolly, hanging about him in all kinds of graceful winning ways, helped to button and buckle and brush him up, and get him into one of the tightest coats that ever was made by mortal tailor, he was the proudest father in all England.

"What a handy jade it is!" said the locksmith to Mrs. Varden, who stood by with folded hands—rather proud of her husband too—while Miggs held his cap and sword at arm's length, as if mistrusting that the latter might run some one through the body of its own accord; "but never marry a soldier, Doll, my dear."

Dolly didn't ask why not, or say a word, indeed, but stooped her head down very low to tie his sash.

"I never wear this dress," said honest Gabriel, "but I think of poor Joe Willet. I loved Joe; he was always a favourite of mine. Poor Joe!—Dear heart, my girl, don't tie me in so tight."

Dolly laughed—not like herself at all—the strangest little laugh that could be—and held her head down lower still.

"Poor Joe!" resumed the locksmith, muttering to himself; "I always wish he had come to me. I might have made it up between them, if he had. Ah! old John made a great mistake in his way of acting by that lad—a great mistake.—Have you nearly tied that sash, my dear?"

What an ill-made sash it was! There it was loose again, and trailing on the ground. Dolly was obliged to kneel down, and recommence at the beginning.

"Never mind young Willet, Varden," said his wife, frowning; "you might find some one more deserving to talk about, I think."

Miss Miggs gave a great sniff to the same effect.

"Nay, Martha," cried the locksmith, "don't let us bear too hard upon him. If the lad is dead indeed, we'll deal kindly by his memory."

"A runaway and a vagabond!" said Mrs. Varden.

Miss Miggs expressed her concurrence as before.

"A runaway, my dear, but not a vagabond," returned the locksmith in a gentle tone. "He behaved himself well, did Joe—always—and

was a handsome, manly fellow. Don't call him a vagabond, Martha."

Mrs. Varden coughed—and so did Miggs.

"He tried hard to gain your good opinion, Martha, I can tell you," said the locksmith, smiling, and stroking his chin. "Ah! that he did. It seems but yesterday that he followed me out to the Maypole door one night, and begged me not to say how like a boy they used him—say here, at home, he meant, though at the time, I recollect, I didn't understand. 'And how's Miss Dolly, sir?' says Joe," pursued the locksmith, musing sorrowfully. "Ah! Poor Joe!"

"Well, I declare!" cried Miggs. "Oh! Goodness gracious me!"

"What's the matter now?" said Gabriel, turning sharply to her.

"Why, if here an't Miss Dolly," said the handmaid, stooping down to look into her face, "a giving way to floods of tears. Oh, mim! oh, sir! Raly it's give me such a turn," cried the susceptible damsel, pressing her hand upon her side to quell the palpitation of her heart, "that you might knock me down with a feather."

The locksmith, after glancing at Miss Miggs as if he could have wished to have a feather brought straightway, looked on with a broad stare while Dolly hurried away, followed by that sympathising young woman: then, turning to his wife, stammered out, "Is Dolly ill? Have I done anything? Is it my fault?"

"Your fault!" cried Mrs. V. reproachfully. "There—you had better make haste out."

"What have I done?" said poor Gabriel. "It was agreed that Mr. Edward's name was never to be mentioned, and I have not spoken of him, have I?"

Mrs. Varden merely replied that she had no patience with him, and bounced off after the other two. The unfortunate locksmith wound his sash about him, girded on his sword, put on his cap, and walked out.

"I am not much of a dab at my exercise," he said under his breath, "but I shall get into fewer scrapes at that work than at this. Every man came into the world for something; my department seems to be to make every woman cry without meaning it. It's rather hard!"

But he forgot it before he reached the end of the street, and went on with a shining face, nodding to the neighbours, and showering about his friendly greetings like mild spring rain.

## CHAPTER XLII.

**T**HE Royal East London Volunteers made a brilliant sight that day: formed into lines, squares, circles, triangles, and what not, to the beating of drums and the streaming of flags; and performed a vast number of complex evolutions, in all of which Sergeant Varden bore a conspicuous share. Having displayed their military prowess to the utmost in these warlike shows, they marched in glittering order to the Chelsea Bun House, and regaled in the adjacent taverns until dark. Then at sound of drum they fell in again, and returned, amidst the shouting of his Majesty's lieges, to the place from whence they came.

The homeward march being somewhat tardy, —owing to the unsoldier-like behaviour of certain corporals, who, being gentlemen of sedentary pursuits in private life and excitable out of doors, broke several windows with their bayonets, and rendered it imperative on the commanding officer to deliver them over to a strong guard, with whom they fought at intervals as they came along;—it was nine o'clock when the locksmith reached home. A hackney coach was waiting near his door; and, as he passed it, Mr. Haredale looked from the window and called him by his name.

"The sight of you is good for sore eyes, sir," said the locksmith, stepping up to him. "I wish you had walked in, though, rather than waited here."

"There is nobody at home, I find," Mr. Haredale answered: "besides, I desired to be as private as I could."

"Humph!" muttered the locksmith, looking round at his house. "Gone with Simon Tappertit to that precious Branch, no doubt."

Mr. Haredale invited him to come into the coach, and, if he were not tired or anxious to go home, to ride with him a little way, that they might have some talk together. Gabriel cheerfully complied, and the coachman, mounting his box, drove off.

"Varden," said Mr. Haredale after a minute's pause, "you will be amazed to hear what errand I am on; it will seem a very strange one."

"I have no doubt it's a reasonable one, sir, and has a meaning in it," replied the locksmith; "or it would not be yours at all. Have you just come back to town, sir?"

"But half an hour ago."

"Bringing no news of Barnaby or his mother?"



said the locksmith dubiously. "Ah! you needn't shake your head, sir. It was a wild-goose chase. I feared that from the first. You exhausted all reasonable means of discovery when they went away. To begin again after so long a time has passed is hopeless, sir—quite hopeless."

"Why, where are they?" he returned impatiently. "Where can they be? Above-ground?"

"God knows," rejoined the locksmith. "Many that I knew above it five years ago, have their beds under the grass now. And the world is a wide place. It's a hopeless attempt, sir, believe me. We must leave the discovery of this mystery, like all others, to time, and accident, and Heaven's pleasure."

"Varden, my good fellow," said Mr. Haredale, "I have a deeper meaning, in my present anxiety to find them out, than you can fathom. It is not a mere whim; it is not the casual revival of my old wishes and desires; but an earnest, solemn purpose. My thoughts and dreams all tend to it, and fix it in my mind. I have no rest by day or night; I have no peace or quiet; I am haunted."

His voice was so altered from its usual tones, and his manner bespoke so much emotion, that Gabriel, in his wonder, could only sit and look towards him in the darkness, and fancy the expression of his face.

"Do not ask me," continued Mr. Haredale, "to explain myself. If I were to do so, you would think me the victim of some hideous fancy. It is enough that this is so, and that I cannot—no, I cannot—lie quietly in my bed, without doing what will seem to you incomprehensible."

"Since when, sir," said the locksmith after a pause, "has this uneasy feeling been upon you?"

Mr. Haredale hesitated for some moments, and then replied: "Since the night of the storm. In short, since the last nineteenth of March."

As though he feared that Varden might express surprise, or reason with him, he hastily went on:

"You will think, I know, I labour under some delusion. Perhaps I do. But it is not a morbid one; it is a wholesome action of the mind, reasoning on actual occurrences. You know the furniture remains in Mrs. Rudge's house, and that it has been shut up, by my orders, since she went away, save once a week or so, when an old neighbour visits it to scare away the rats. I am on my way there now."

"For what purpose?" asked the locksmith.

"To pass the night there," he replied; "and

not to-night alone, but many nights. This is a secret which I trust to you in case of any unexpected emergency. You will not come, unless in case of strong necessity, to me; from dusk to broad day I shall be there. Emma, your daughter, and the rest suppose me out of London, as I have been until within this hour. Do not undeceive them. This is the errand I am bound upon. I know I may confide it to you, and I rely upon your questioning me no more at this time."

With that, as if to change the theme, he led the astounded locksmith back to the night of the Maypole highwayman, to the robbery of Edward Chester, to the reappearance of the man at Mrs. Rudge's house, and to all the strange circumstances which afterwards occurred. He even asked him carelessly about the man's height, his face, his figure, whether he was like any one he had ever seen—like Hugh, for instance, or any man he had known at any time—and put many questions of that sort, which the locksmith, considering them as mere devices to engage his attention and prevent his expressing the astonishment he felt, answered pretty much at random.

At length they arrived at the corner of the street in which the house stood, where Mr. Haredale, alighting, dismissed the coach. "If you desire to see me safely lodged," he said, turning to the locksmith with a gloomy smile, "you can."

Gabriel, to whom all former marvels had been nothing in comparison with this, followed him along the narrow pavement in silence. When they reached the door, Mr. Haredale softly opened it with a key he had about him, and closing it when Varden entered, they were left in thorough darkness.

They groped their way into the ground-floor room. Here Mr. Haredale struck a light, and kindled a pocket taper he had brought with him for the purpose. It was then, when the flame was full upon him, that the locksmith saw for the first time how haggard, pale, and changed he looked; how worn and thin he was; how perfectly his whole appearance coincided with all that he had said so strangely as they rode along. It was not an unnatural impulse in Gabriel, after what he had heard, to note curiously the expression of his eyes. It was perfectly collected and rational;—so much so, indeed, that he felt ashamed of his momentary suspicion, and drooped his own when Mr. Haredale looked towards him, as if he feared they would betray his thoughts.

"Will you walk through the house?" said Mr. Haredale, with a glance towards the window,

the crazy shutters of which were closed and fastened. "Speak low."

There was a kind of awe about the place, which would have rendered it difficult to speak in any other manner. Gabriel whispered "Yes," and followed him up-stairs.

Everything was just as they had seen it last. There was a sense of closeness from the exclusion of fresh air, and a gloom and heaviness around, as though long imprisonment had made the very silence sad. The homely hangings of the beds and windows had begun to droop; the dust lay thick upon their dwindling folds; and damp had made their way through ceiling, wall, and floor. The boards creaked beneath their tread, as if resenting the unaccustomed intrusion; nimble spiders, paralysed by the taper's glare, checked the motion of their hundred legs upon the wall, or dropped like lifeless things upon the ground; the death-watch ticked; and the scampering feet of rats and mice rattled behind the wainscot.

As they looked about them on the decaying furniture, it was strange to find how vividly it presented those to whom it had belonged, and with whom it was once familiar. Grip seemed to perch again upon his high-backed chair; Barnaby to crouch in his old favourite corner by the fire; the mother to resume her usual seat, and watch him as of old. Even when they could separate these objects from the phantoms of the mind which they invoked, the latter only glided out of sight, but lingered near them still; for then they seemed to lurk in closets and behind the doors, ready to start out and suddenly accost them in well-remembered tones.

They went down-stairs, and again into the room they had just now left. Mr. Haredale unbuckled his sword and laid it on the table, with a pair of pocket pistols; then told the locksmith he would light him to the door.

"But this is a dull place, sir," said Gabriel, lingering. "May no one share your watch?"

He shook his head, and so plainly evinced his wish to be alone, that Gabriel could say no more. In another moment the locksmith was standing in the street, whence he could see that the light once more travelled up-stairs, and soon returning to the room below, shone brightly through the chinks in the shutters.

If ever man were sorely puzzled and perplexed, the locksmith was that night. Even when snugly seated by his own fireside, with Mrs. Varden opposite in a nightcap and night-jacket, and Dolly beside him (in a most distracting dishabille) curling her hair, and smiling as if she had never cried in all her life, and never could—

even then, with Toby at his elbow and his pipe in his mouth, and Miggs (but that perhaps was not much) falling asleep in the background, he could not quite discard his wonder and uneasiness. So in his dreams—still there was Mr. Haredale, haggard and careworn, listening in the solitary house to every sound that stirred, with the taper shining through the chinks until the day should turn it pale and end his lonely watching.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

**N**EXT morning brought no satisfaction to the locksmith's thoughts, nor next day, nor the next, nor many others. Often after nightfall he entered the street, and turned his eyes towards the well-known house; and as surely as he did so, there was the solitary light still gleaming through the crevices of the window shutter, while all within was motionless, noiseless, cheerless, as a grave. Unwilling to hazard Mr. Haredale's favour by disobeying his strict injunction, he never ventured to knock at the door, or to make his presence known in any way. But whenever strong interest and curiosity attracted him to the spot—which was not seldom—the light was always there.

If he could have known what passed within, the knowledge would have yielded him no clue to this mysterious vigil. At twilight Mr. Haredale shut himself up, and at daybreak he came forth. He never missed a night, always came and went alone, and never varied his proceedings in the least degree.

The manner of his watch was this. At dusk, he entered the house in the same way as when the locksmith bore him company, kindled a light, went through the rooms, and narrowly examined them. That done, he returned to the chamber on the ground-floor, and laying his sword and pistols on the table, sat by it until morning.

He usually had a book with him, and often tried to read, but never fixed his eyes or thoughts upon it for five minutes together. The slightest noise without doors caught his ear; a step upon the pavement seemed to make his heart leap.

He was not without some refreshment during the long lonely hours; generally carrying in his pocket a sandwich of bread and meat, and a small flask of wine. The latter, diluted with large quantities of water, he drank in a heated, feverish way as though his throat were dried;



but he scarcely ever broke his fast by so much as a crumb of bread.

If this voluntary sacrifice of sleep and comfort had its origin, as the locksmith on consideration was disposed to think, in any superstitious expectation of the fulfilment of a dream or vision connected with the event on which he had brooded for so many years, and if he waited for some ghostly visitor who walked abroad when men lay sleeping in their beds, he showed no trace of fear or wavering. His stern features expressed inflexible resolution; his brows were puckered, and his lips compressed, with deep and settled purpose; and when he started at a noise and listened, it was not with the start of fear, but hope, and catching up his sword as though the hour had come at last, he would clutch it in his tight-clenched hand, and listen, with sparkling eyes and eager looks, until it died away.

These disappointments were numerous, for they ensued on almost every sound, but his constancy was not shaken. Still, every night he was at his post, the same stern, sleepless sentinel; and still night passed, and morning dawned, and he must watch again.

This went on for weeks; he had taken a lodging at Vauxhall in which to pass the day and rest himself; and from this place, when the tide served, he usually came to London Bridge from Westminster by water, in order that he might avoid the busy streets.

One evening, shortly before twilight, he came his accustomed road upon the river's bank, intending to pass through Westminster Hall into Palace Yard, and there take boat to London Bridge as usual. There was a pretty large concourse of people assembled round the Houses of Parliament, looking at the members as they entered and departed, and giving vent to rather noisy demonstrations of approval or dislike, according to their known opinions. As he made his way among the throng, he heard once or twice the No-Popery cry, which was then becoming pretty familiar to the ears of most men; but holding it in very slight regard, and observing that the idlers were of the lowest grade, he neither thought nor cared about it, but made his way along with perfect indifference.

There were many little knots and groups of persons in Westminster Hall: some few looking upward at its noble ceiling, and at the rays of evening light, tinted by the setting sun, which streamed in aslant through its small windows, and, growing dimmer by degrees, were quenched in the gathering gloom below; some, noisy passengers, mechanics going home from work,

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and otherwise, who hurried quickly through, waking the echoes with their voices, and soon darkening the small door in the distance as they passed into the street beyond; some, in busy conference together on political or private matters, pacing slowly up and down with eyes that sought the ground, and seeming, by their attitudes, to listen earnestly from head to foot. Here, a dozen squabbling urchins made a very Babel in the air; there, a solitary man, half clerk half mendicant, paced up and down with hungry dejection in his look and gait: at his elbow passed an errand-lad, swinging his basket round and round, and with his shrill whistle riving the very timbers of the roof; while a more observant school-boy, half-way through, pocketed his ball, and eyed the distant beadle as he came looming on. It was that time of evening when, if you shut your eyes and open them again, the darkness of an hour appears to have gathered in a second. The smooth-worn pavement, dusty with footsteps, still called upon the lofty walls to reiterate the shuffle and the tread of feet unceasingly, save when the closing of some heavy door resounded through the building like a clap of thunder, and drowned all other noises in its rolling sound.

Mr. Haredale, glancing only at such of these groups as he passed nearest to, and then in a manner betokening that his thoughts were elsewhere, had nearly traversed the Hall, when two persons before him caught his attention. One of these, a gentleman in elegant attire, carried in his hand a cane, which he twirled in a jaunty manner as he loitered on; the other, an obsequious, crouching, fawning figure, listened to what he said—at times throwing in a humble word himself—and, with his shoulders shrugged up to his ears, rubbed his hands submissively, or answered at intervals by an inclination of the head, half-way between a nod of acquiescence and a bow of most profound respect.

In the abstract there was nothing very remarkable in this pair, for servility waiting on a handsome suit of clothes and a cane—not to speak of gold and silver sticks, or wands of office—is common enough. But there was that about the well-dressed man, yes, and about the other likewise, which struck Mr. Haredale with no pleasant feeling. He hesitated, stopped, and would have stepped aside and turned out of his path, but at the moment the other two faced about quickly, and stumbled upon him before he could avoid them.

The gentleman with the cane lifted his hat and had begun to tender an apology, which Mr. Haredale had begun as hastily to acknow-

ledge and walk away, when he stopped short and cried, "Haredale! Gad bless me, this is strange indeed!"

"It is," he returned impatiently; "yes—  
2—"

"My dear friend," cried the other, detaining him, "why such great speed? One minute, Haredale, for the sake of old acquaintance."

"I am in haste," he said. "Neither of us has sought this meeting. Let it be a brief one. Good night!"

"Fie, fie!" replied Sir John (for it was he), "how very churlish! We were speaking of you. Your name was on my lips—perhaps you heard me mention it. No? I am sorry for that. I am really sorry.—You know our friend here, Haredale? This is really a most remarkable meeting!"

The friend, plainly very ill at ease, had made bold to press Sir John's arm, and to give him other significant hints that he was desirous of avoiding this introduction. As it did not suit Sir John's purpose, however, that it should be evaded, he appeared quite unconscious of these silent remonstrances, and inclined his hand towards him as he spoke, to call attention to him more particularly.

The friend, therefore, had nothing for it but to muster up the pleasantest smile he could, and to make a conciliatory bow as Mr. Haredale turned his eyes upon him. Seeing that he was recognised, he put out his hand in an awkward and embarrassed manner, which was not mended by its contemptuous rejection.

"Mr. Gashford!" said Haredale coldly. "It is as I have heard, then. You have left the darkness for the light, sir, and hate those whose opinions you formerly held with all the bitterness of a renegade. You are an honour, sir, to any cause. I wish the one you espouse at present much joy of the acquisition it has made."

The secretary rubbed his hands and bowed, as though he would disarm his adversary by humbling himself before him. Sir John Chester again exclaimed, with an air of great gaiety, "Now, really, this is a most remarkable meeting!" and took a pinch of snuff with his usual self-possession.

"Mr. Haredale," said Gashford, stealthily raising his eyes, and letting them drop again when they met the other's steady gaze, "is too conscientious, too honourable, too manly, I am sure, to attach unworthy motives to an honest change of opinions, even though it implies a doubt of those he holds himself. Mr. Haredale is too just, too generous, too clear-sighted in his moral vision, to——"

"Yes, sir!" he rejoined with a sarcastic smile, finding that the secretary stopped. "You were saying——"

Gashford meekly shrugged his shoulders, and, looking on the ground again, was silent.

"No, but let us really," interposed Sir John at this juncture, "let us really, for a moment, contemplate the very remarkable character of this meeting. Haredale, my dear friend, pardon me if I think you are not sufficiently impressed with its singularity. Here we stand, by no previous appointment or arrangement, three old schoolfellows, in Westminster Hall: three old boarders in a remarkably dull and shady seminary at St. Omer's, where you, being Catholics, and of necessity educated out of England, were brought up: and where I, being a promising young Protestant at that time, was sent to learn the French tongue from a native of Paris!"

"Add to the singularity, Sir John," said Mr. Haredale, "that some of you Protestants of promise are at this moment leagued in yonder building to prevent our having the surpassing and unheard-of privilege of teaching our children to read and write—here—in this land, where thousands of us enter your service every year, and to preserve the freedom of which we die in bloody battles abroad in heaps; and that others of you, to the number of some thousands as I learn, are led on to look on all men of my creed as wolves and beasts of prey by this man Gashford. Add to it, besides, the bare fact that this man lives in society, walks the streets in broad day—I was about to say, holds up his head, but that he does not—and it will be strange, and very strange, I grant you."

"Oh! you are hard upon our friend," replied Sir John with an engaging smile. "You are really very hard upon our friend!"

"Let him go on, Sir John," said Gashford, fumbling with his gloves. "Let him go on, I can make allowances, Sir John. I am honoured with your good opinion, and I can dispense with Mr. Haredale's. Mr. Haredale is a sufferer from the penal laws, and I can't expect his favour."

"You have so much of my favour, sir," retorted Mr. Haredale, with a bitter glance at the third party in their conversation, "that I am glad to see you in such good company. You are the essence of your great Association in yourselves."

"Now, there you mistake," said Sir John in his most benignant way. "There—which is a most remarkable circumstance for a man of your punctuality and exactness, Haredale—you fall into an error. I don't belong to the body;



I have an immense respect for its members, but I don't belong to it; although I am, it is certainly true, the conscientious opponent of your being relieved. I feel it my duty to be so; it is a most unfortunate necessity; and cost me a bitter struggle.—Will you try this box? If you don't object to a trifling infusion of a very chaste scent, you'll find its flavour exquisite."

"I ask your pardon, Sir John," said Mr. Haredale, declining the proffer with a motion of his hand, "for having ranked you among the humble instruments who are obvious and in all men's sight. I should have done more justice to your genius. Men of your capacity plot in secrecy and safety, and leave exposed posts to the duller wits."

"Don't apologise, for the world," replied Sir John sweetly; "old friends like you and I may be allowed some freedoms, or the deuce is in it."

Gashford, who had been very restless all this time, but had not once looked up, now turned to Sir John, and ventured to mutter something to the effect that he must go, or my lord would perhaps be waiting.

"Don't distress yourself, good sir," said Mr. Haredale, "I'll take my leave, and put you at your ease——" which he was about to do without ceremony, when he was stayed by a buzz and murmur at the upper end of the Hall, and, looking in that direction, saw Lord George Gordon coming on, with a crowd of people round him.

There was a lurking look of triumph, though very differently expressed, in the faces of his two companions, which made it a natural impulse on Mr. Haredale's part not to give way before this leader, but to stand there while he passed. He drew himself up, and, clasping his hands behind him, looked on with a proud and scornful aspect, while Lord George slowly advanced (for the press was great about him) towards the spot where they were standing.

He had left the House of Commons but that moment, and had come straight down into the Hall, bringing with him, as his custom was, intelligence of what had been said that night in reference to the Papists, and what petitions had been presented in their favour, and who had supported them, and when the bill was to be brought in, and when it would be advisable to present their own Great Protestant petition. All this he told the persons about him in a loud voice, and with great abundance of ungainly gesture. Those who were nearest him made comments to each other, and vented threats and murmurings; those who were outside the

crowd cried "Silence" and "Stand back," or closed in upon the rest, endeavouring to make a forcible exchange of places: and so they came driving on in a very disorderly and irregular way, as it is the manner of a crowd to do.

When they were very near to where the secretary, Sir John, and Mr. Haredale stood, Lord George turned round, and, making a few remarks of a sufficiently violent and incoherent kind, concluded with the usual sentiment, and called for three cheers to back it. While these were in the act of being given with great energy, he extricated himself from the press, and stepped up to Gashford's side. Both he and Sir John being well known to the populace, they fell back a little, and left the four standing together.

"Mr. Haredale, Lord George," said Sir John Chester, seeing that the nobleman regarded him with an inquisitive look. "A Catholic gentleman unfortunately—most unhappily a Catholic—but an esteemed acquaintance of mine, and once of Mr. Gashford's. My dear Haredale, this is Lord George Gordon."

"I should have known that, had I been ignorant of his lordship's person," said Mr. Haredale. "I hope there is but one gentleman in England who, addressing an ignorant and excited throng, would speak of a large body of his fellow-subjects in such injurious language as I heard this moment. For shame, my lord, for shame!"

"I cannot talk to you, sir," replied Lord George in a loud voice, and waving his hand in a disturbed and agitated manner; "we have nothing in common."

"We have much in common—many things—all that the Almighty gave us," said Mr. Haredale; "and common charity, not to say common sense and common decency, should teach you to refrain from these proceedings. If every one of those men had arms in their hands at this moment, as they have them in their heads, I would not leave this place without telling you that you disgrace your station."

"I don't hear you, sir," he replied in the same manner as before; "I can't hear you. It is indifferent to me what you say. Don't retort, Gashford," for the secretary had made a show of wishing to do so; "I can hold no communion with the worshippers of idols."

As he said this, he glanced at Sir John, who lifted his hands and eyebrows, as if deploring the intemperate conduct of Mr. Haredale, and smiled in admiration of the crowd and of their leader.

"*He* retort!" cried Haredale. "Look you here, my lord. Do you know this man?"

Lord George replied by laying his hand upon the shoulder of his cringing secretary, and viewing him with a smile of confidence.

"This man," said Mr. Haredale, eyeing him from top to toe, "who in his boyhood was a thief, and has been, from that time to this, a servile, false, and truckling knave: this man, who has crawled and crept through life, wounding the hands he licked, and biting those he fawned upon: this sycophant, who never knew

what honour, truth, or courage meant; who robbed his benefactor's daughter of her virtue, and married her to break her heart, and did it, with stripes and cruelty: this creature, who has whined at kitchen windows for the broken food, and begged for halfpence at our chapel doors: this apostle of the faith, whose tender conscience cannot bear the altars where his vicious life was publicly denounced.—Do you know this man?"



"HE RETORT!" CRIED HAREDALE. "LOOK YOU HERE, MY LORD. DO YOU KNOW THIS MAN?"

"Oh, really—you are very, very hard upon our friend!" exclaimed Sir John.

"Let Mr. Haredale go on," said Gashford, upon whose unwholesome face the perspiration had broken out, during this speech, in blotches of wet; "I don't mind him, Sir John; it's quite as indifferent to me what he says as it is to my lord. If he reviles my lord as you have heard, Sir John, how can I hope to escape?"

"Is it not enough, my lord," Mr. Haredale continued, "that I, as good a gentleman as you,

must hold my property, such as it is, by a trick at which the state connives because of these hard laws; and that we may not teach our youth in schools the common principles of right and wrong; but must we be denounced and ridden by such men as this? Here is a man to head your No-Popery cry! For shame! For shame!"

The infatuated nobleman had glanced more than once at Sir John Chester, as if to inquire whether there was any truth in these statements



concerning Gashford, and Sir John had as often plainly answered by a shrug or look, "Oh dear me! no." He now said, in the same loud key, and in the same strange manner as before:

"I have nothing to say, sir, in reply, and no desire to hear anything more. I beg you won't obtrude your conversation, or these personal attacks, upon me. I shall not be deterred from doing my duty to my country and my countrymen by any such attempts, whether they proceed from emissaries of the Pope or not, I assure you. Come, Gashford!"

They had walked on a few paces while speaking, and were now at the Hall-door, through which they passed together. Mr. Haredale, without any leave-taking, turned away to the river stairs, which were close at hand, and hailed the only boatman who remained there.

But the throng of people—the foremost of whom had heard every word that Lord George Gordon said, and among all of whom the rumour had been rapidly dispersed that the stranger was a Papist who was bearding him for his advocacy of the popular cause—came pouring out pell-mell, and, forcing the nobleman, his secretary, and Sir John Chester on before them, so that they appeared to be at their head, crowded to the top of the stairs, where Mr. Haredale waited until the boat was ready, and there stood still, leaving him on a little clear space by himself.

They were not silent, however, though inactive. At first some indistinct mutterings arose among them, which were followed by a hiss or two, and these swelled by degrees into a perfect storm. Then one voice said, "Down with the Papists!" and there was a pretty general cheer, but nothing more. After a lull of a few moments, one man cried out, "Stone him;" another, "Duck him;" another, in a stentorian voice, "No Popery!" This favourite cry the rest re-echoed, and the mob, which might have been two hundred strong, joined in a general shout.

Mr. Haredale had stood calmly on the brink of the steps until they made this demonstration, when he looked round contemptuously, and walked at a slow pace down the stairs. He was pretty near the boat, when Gashford, as if without intention, turned about, and directly afterwards a great stone was thrown by some hand in the crowd, which struck him on the head, and made him stagger like a drunken man.

The blood sprung freely from the wound, and trickled down his coat. He turned directly, and rushing up the steps with a boldness and passion which made them all fall back, demanded:

"Who did that? Show me the man who hit me."

Not a soul moved; except some in the rear who slunk off, and, escaping to the other side of the way, looked on like indifferent spectators.

"Who did that?" he repeated. "Show me the man who did it. Dog, was it you? It was your deed, if not your hand—I know you."

He threw himself on Gashford as he said the words, and hurled him to the ground. There was a sudden motion in the crowd, and some laid hands upon him, but his sword was out, and they fell off again.

"My lord—Sir John," he cried, "draw, one of you—you are responsible for this outrage, and I look to you. Draw, if you are gentlemen." With that he struck Sir John upon the breast with the flat of his weapon, and with a burning face and flashing eyes stood upon his guard, alone, before them all.

For an instant, for the briefest space of time the mind can readily conceive, there was a change in Sir John's smooth face, such as no man ever saw there. The next moment he stepped forward, and laid one hand on Mr. Haredale's arm, while with the other he endeavoured to appease the crowd.

"My dear friend, my good Haredale, you are blinded with passion—it's very natural, extremely natural—but you don't know friends from foes."

"I know them all, sir; I can distinguish well——" he retorted, almost mad with rage. "Sir John, Lord George—do you hear me? Are you cowards?"

"Never mind, sir," said a man, forcing his way between, and pushing him towards the stairs with friendly violence, "never mind asking that. For God's sake, get away. What *can* you do against this number? And there are as many more in the next street, who'll be round directly,"—indeed, they began to pour in as he said the words,—"you'd be giddy from that cut in the first heat of a scuffle. Now do retire, sir, or take my word for it you'll be worse used than you would be if every man in the crowd was a woman, and that woman Bloody Mary. Come, sir, make haste—as quick as you can."

Mr. Haredale, who began to turn faint and sick, felt how sensible this advice was, and descended the steps with his unknown friend's assistance. John Grueby (for John it was) helped him into the boat, and giving her a shove off, which sent her thirty feet into the tide, bade the waterman pull away like a Briton; and walked up again as composedly as if he had just landed.

There was at first a slight disposition on the part of the mob to resent this interference; but John looking particularly strong and cool, and wearing besides Lord George's livery, they thought better of it, and contented themselves with sending a shower of small missiles after the boat, which plashed harmlessly in the water; for she had by this time cleared the bridge, and was darting swiftly down the centre of the stream.

From this amusement they proceeded to giving Protestant knocks at the doors of private houses, breaking a few lamps, and assaulting some stray constables. But it being whispered that a detachment of Life Guards had been sent for, they took to their heels with great expedition and left the street quite clear.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

**W**HEN the concourse separated, and, dividing into chance clusters, drew off in various directions, there still remained upon the scene of the late disturbance one man. This man was Gashford, who, bruised by his late fall, and hurt in a much greater degree by the indignity he had undergone, and the exposure of which he had been the victim, limped up and down, breathing curses and threats of vengeance.

It was not the secretary's nature to waste his wrath in words. While he vented the froth of his malevolence in these effusions, he kept a steady eye on two men, who, having disappeared with the rest when the alarm was spread, had since returned, and were now visible in the moonlight, at no great distance, as they walked to and fro, and talked together.

He made no move towards them, but waited patiently on the dark side of the street until they were tired of strolling backwards and forwards and walked away in company. Then he followed, but at some distance: keeping them in view, without appearing to have that object, or being seen by them.

They went up Parliament Street, past St. Martin's Church, and away by St. Giles's to Tottenham Court Road, at the back of which, upon the western side, was then a place called the Green Lanes. This was a retired spot, not of the choicest kind, leading into the fields. Great heaps of ashes; stagnant pools, overgrown with rank grass and duckweed; broken turnstiles; and the upright posts of palings long

since carried off for fire-wood, which menaced all heedless walkers with their jagged and rusty nails; were the leading features of the landscape; while here and there a donkey, or a ragged horse, tethered to a stake, and cropping off a wretched meal from the coarse stunted turf, were quite in keeping with the scene, and would have suggested (if the houses had not done so sufficiently of themselves) how very poor the people were who lived in the crazy huts adjacent, and how fool-hardy it might prove for one who carried money, or wore decent clothes, to walk that way alone, unless by daylight.

Poverty has its whims and shows of taste, as wealth has. Some of these cabins were turreted, some had false windows painted on their rotten walls; one had a mimic clock upon a crazy tower of four feet high, which screened the chimney; each in its little patch of ground had a rude seat or arbour. The population dealt in bones, in rags, in broken glass, in old wheels, in birds, and dogs. These, in their several ways of stowage, filled the gardens; and shedding a perfume, not of the most delicious nature, in the air, filled it besides with yelps, and screams, and howling.

Into this retreat the secretary followed the two men whom he had held in sight; and here he saw them safely lodged in one of the meanest houses, which was but a room, and that of small dimensions. He waited without until the sound of their voices, joined in a discordant song, assured him they were making merry; and then approaching the door, by means of a tottering plank which crossed the ditch in front, knocked at it with his hand.

"Muster Gashford!" said the man who opened it, taking his pipe from his mouth, in evident surprise. "Why, who'd have thought of this here honour? Walk in, Muster Gashford—walk in, sir."

Gashford required no second invitation, and entered with a gracious air. There was a fire in the rusty grate (for though the spring was pretty far advanced, the nights were cold), and on a stool beside it Hugh sat smoking. Dennis placed a chair, his only one, for the secretary, in front of the hearth; and took his seat again upon the stool he had left when he rose to give the visitor admission.

"What's in the wind now, Muster Gashford?" he said as he resumed his pipe, and looked at him askew. "Any orders from head-quarters? Are we going to begin? What is it, Muster Gashford?"

"Oh, nothing, nothing," rejoined the secretary with a friendly nod to Hugh. "We have broken



the ice, though. We had a little spurt to-day—eh, Dennis?”

“A very little one,” growled the hangman. “Not half enough for me.”

“Nor me neither!” cried Hugh. “Give us something to do with life in it—with life in it, master. Ha, ha!”

“Why, you wouldn’t,” said the secretary with his worst expression of face, and in his mildest tones, “have anything to do with—with death in it?”

“I don’t know that,” replied Hugh. “I’m open to orders. I don’t care; not I.”

“Nor I!” vociferated Dennis.

“Brave fellows!” said the secretary in as pastor-like a voice as if he were commending them for some uncommon act of valour and generosity. “By-the-bye”—and here he stopped and warmed his hands: then suddenly looked up—“who threw that stone to-day?”

Mr. Dennis coughed and shook his head, as who should say, “A mystery indeed!” Hugh sat and smoked in silence.

“It was well done,” said the secretary, warming his hands again. “I should like to know that man.”

“Would you?” said Dennis, after looking at his face to assure himself that he was serious. “Would you like to know that man, Muster Gashford?”

“I should indeed,” replied the secretary.

“Why, then, Lord love you,” said the hangman, in his hoarsest chuckle, as he pointed with his pipe to Hugh, “there he sets. That’s the man. My stars and halts, Muster Gashford,” he added in a whisper, as he drew his stool close to him and jogged him with his elbow, “what a interesting blade he is! He wants as much holding in as a thorough-bred bulldog. If it hadn’t been for me to-day, he’d have had that ’ere Roman down, and made a riot of it, in another minute.”

“And why not?” cried Hugh in a surly voice, as he overheard this last remark. “Where’s the good of putting things off? Strike while the iron’s hot; that’s what I say.”

“Ah!” retorted Dennis, shaking his head with a kind of pity for his friend’s ingenuous youth; “but suppose the iron an’t hot, brother? You must get people’s blood up afore you strike, and have ’em in the humour. There wasn’t quite enough to provoke ’em to-day, I tell you. If you’d had your way, you’d have spoilt the fun to come, and ruined us.”

“Dennis is quite right,” said Gashford smoothly. “He is perfectly correct. Dennis has great knowledge of the world.”

“I ought to have, Muster Gashford, seeing what a many people I’ve helped out of it, eh?” grinned the hangman, whispering the words behind his hand.

The secretary laughed at this, just as much as Dennis could desire, and when he had done, said, turning to Hugh:

“Dennis’s policy was mine, as you may have observed. You saw, for instance, how I fell when I was set upon. I made no resistance. I did nothing to provoke an outbreak. Oh dear no!”

“No, by the Lord Harry!” cried Dennis with a noisy laugh, “you went down very quiet, Muster Gashford—and very flat besides. I thinks to myself at the time, ‘It’s all up with Muster Gashford!’ I never see a man lay flatter, nor more still—with the life in him—than you did to-day. He’s a rough ’un to play with, is that ’ere Papist, and that’s the fact.”

The secretary’s face, as Dennis roared with laughter, and turned his wrinkled eyes on Hugh, who did the like, might have furnished a study for the Devil’s picture. He sat quite silent until they were serious again, and then said, looking round:

“We are very pleasant here; so very pleasant, Dennis, that but for my lord’s particular desire that I should sup with him, and the time being very near at hand, I should be inclined to stay until it would be hardly safe to go homeward. I come upon a little business—yes, I do—as you supposed. It’s very flattering to you; being this. If we ever should be obliged—and we can’t tell, you know—this is a very uncertain world—”

“I believe you, Muster Gashford,” interposed the hangman with a grave nod. “The uncertainties as I’ve seen in reference to this here state of existence, the unexpected contingencies as have come about! Oh my eye!” Feeling the subject much too vast for expression, he puffed at his pipe again, and looked the rest.

“I say,” resumed the secretary in a slow, impressive way, “we can’t tell what may come to pass; and if we should be obliged, against our wills, to have recourse to violence, my lord (who has suffered terribly to-day, as far as words can go) consigns to you two—bearing in mind my recommendation of you both as good staunch men, beyond all doubt and suspicion—the pleasant task of punishing this Haredale. You may do as you please with him or his, provided that you show no mercy and no quarter, and leave no two beams of his house standing where the builder placed them. You may sack it, burn it, do with it as you like, but it must come

down; it must be razed to the ground; and he, and all belonging to him, left as shelterless as new-born infants whom their mothers have exposed. Do you understand me?" said Gashford, pausing and pressing his hands together gently.

"Understand you, master!" cried Hugh. "You speak plain now. Why, this *is* hearty!"

"I knew you would like it," said Gashford, shaking him by the hand; "I thought you would. Good night! Don't rise, Dennis: I would rather find my way alone. I may have to make other visits here, and it's pleasant to come and go without disturbing you. I can find my way perfectly well. Good night!"

He was gone, and had shut the door behind him. They looked at each other, and nodded approvingly. Dennis stirred up the fire.

"This looks a little more like business!" he said.

"Ay, indeed!" cried Hugh; "this suits me."

"I've heard it said of Muster Gashford," said the hangman, "that he'd a surprising memory and wonderful firmness—that he never forgot, and never forgave.—Let's drink his health."

Hugh readily complied—pouring no liquor on the floor when he drank this toast—and they pledged the secretary, as a man after their own hearts, in a bumper.

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## CHAPTER XLV.

**W**HILE the worst passions of the worst men were thus working in the dark, and the mantle of religion, assumed to cover the ugliest deformities, threatened to become the shroud of all that was good and peaceful in society, a circumstance occurred which once more altered the position of two persons from whom this history has long been separated, and to whom it must now return.

In a small English country town, the inhabitants of which supported themselves by the labour of their hands in plaiting and preparing straw for those who made bonnets and other articles of dress and ornament from that material,—concealed under an assumed name, and living in a quiet poverty which knew no change, no pleasures, and few cares but that of struggling on from day to day in the one great toil for bread,—dwelt Barnaby and his mother. Their poor cottage had known no stranger's foot since they sought the shelter of its roof five years before;

nor had they, in all that time, held any commerce or communication with the old world from which they had fled. To labour in peace, and devote her labour and her life to her poor son, was all the widow sought. If happiness can be said at any time to be the lot of one on whom a secret sorrow preys, she was happy now. Tranquillity, resignation, and her strong love of him who needed it so much, formed the small circle of her quiet joys; and, while that remained unbroken, she was contented.

For Barnaby himself, the time which had flown by had passed him like the wind. The daily suns of years had shed no brighter gleam of reason on his mind; no dawn had broken on his long, dark night. He would sit sometimes—often for days together—on a low seat by the fire, or by the cottage door, busy at work (for he had learnt the art his mother plied), and listening, God help him, to the tales she would repeat as a lure to keep him in her sight. He had no recollection of these little narratives; the tale of yesterday was new upon the morrow; but he liked them at the moment; and, when the humour held him, would remain patiently within doors, hearing her stories like a little child, and working cheerfully from sunrise until it was too dark to see.

At other times,—and then their scanty earnings were barely sufficient to furnish them with food, though of the coarsest sort,—he would wander abroad from dawn of day until the twilight deepened into night. Few in that place, even of the children, could be idle, and he had no companions of his own kind. Indeed, there were not many who could have kept up with him in his rambles, had there been a legion. But there were a score of vagabond dogs belonging to the neighbours, who served his purpose quite as well. With two or three of these, or sometimes with a full half-dozen barking at his heels, he would sally forth on some long expedition that consumed the day; and though, on their return at nightfall, the dogs would come home limping and sore-footed, and almost spent with their fatigue, Barnaby was up and off again at sunrise with some new attendants of the same class, with whom he would return in like manner. On all these travels, Grip, in his little basket at his master's back, was a constant member of the party, and when they set off in fine weather and in high spirits, no dog barked louder than the raven.

Their pleasures on these excursions were simple enough. A crust of bread and scrap of meat, with water from the brook or spring, sufficed for their repast. Barnaby's enjoyments



were, to walk, and run, and leap till he was tired; then to lie down on the long grass, or by the growing corn, or in the shade of some tall tree, looking upward at the light clouds as they floated over the blue surface of the sky,

and listening to the lark as she poured out her brilliant song. There were wild flowers to pluck—the bright red poppy, the gentle harebell, the cowslip, and the rose. There were birds to watch; fish; ants; worms; hares or



“A BRAVE EVENING, MOTHER! IF WE HAD CHINKING IN OUR POCKETS BUT A FEW SPECKS OF THAT GOLD WHICH IS PILED UP YONDER IN THE SKY, WE SHOULD BE RICH FOR LIFE.”

rabbits, as they darted across the distant pathway in the wood, and so were gone: millions of living things to have an interest in, and lie in wait for, and clap hands and shout in memory of, when they had disappeared. In default of these, or when they wearied, there was the

merry sun-light to hunt out, as it crept in aslant through leaves and boughs of trees, and hid far down—deep, deep, in hollow places—like a silver pool, where nodding branches seemed to bathe and sport; sweet scents of summer air breathing over fields of beans or clover; the

perfume of wet leaves or moss; the life of waving trees, and shadows always changing. When these or any of them tired, or, in excess of pleasing, tempted him to shut his eyes, there was slumber in the midst of all these soft delights, with the gentle wind murmuring like music in his ears, and everything around melting into one delicious dream.

Their hut—for it was little more—stood on the outskirts of the town, at a short distance from the high-road, but in a secluded place, where few chance passengers strayed at any season of the year. It had a plot of garden ground attached, which Barnaby, in fits and starts of working, trimmed and kept in order. Within doors and without, his mother laboured for their common good; and hail, rain, snow, or sunshine, found no difference in her.

Though so far removed from the scenes of her past life, and with so little thought or hope of ever visiting them again, she seemed to have a strange desire to know what happened in the busy world. Any old newspaper, or scrap of intelligence from London, she caught at with avidity. The excitement it produced was not of a pleasurable kind, for her manner at such times expressed the keenest anxiety and dread; but it never faded in the least degree. Then, and in stormy winter nights, when the wind blew loud and strong, the old expression came into her face, and she would be seized with a fit of trembling, like one who had an ague. But Barnaby noted little of this; and putting a great constraint upon herself, she usually recovered her accustomed manner before the change had caught his observation.

Grip was by no means an idle or unprofitable member of the humble household. Partly by dint of Barnaby's tuition, and partly by pursuing a species of self-instruction common to his tribe, and exerting his powers of observation to the utmost, he had acquired a degree of sagacity which rendered him famous for miles round. His conversational powers and surprising performances were the universal theme: and as many persons came to see the wonderful raven, and none left his exertions unrewarded—when he condescended to exhibit, which was not always, for genius is capricious—his earnings formed an important item in the common stock. Indeed, the bird himself appeared to know his value well; for though he was perfectly free and unrestrained in the presence of Barnaby and his mother, he maintained in public an amazing gravity, and never stooped to any other gratuitous performances than biting the ankles of vagabond boys (an exercise in which he much

delighted), killing a fowl or two occasionally, and swallowing the dinners of various neighbouring dogs, of whom the boldest held him in great awe and dread.

Time had glided on in this way, and nothing had happened to disturb or change their mode of life, when, one summer's night in June, they were in their little garden, resting from the labours of the day. The widow's work was yet upon her knee, and strewn upon the ground about her; and Barnaby stood leaning on his spade, gazing at the brightness in the west, and singing softly to himself.

"A brave evening, mother! If we had thinking in our pockets but a few specks of that gold which is piled up yonder in the sky, we should be rich for life."

"We are better as we are," returned the widow with a quiet smile. "Let us be contented, and we do not want and need not care to have it, though it lay shining at our feet."

"Ay!" said Barnaby, resting with crossed arms on his spade, and looking wistfully at the sunset, "that's well enough, mother; but gold's a good thing to have. I wish that I knew where to find it. Grip and I could do much with gold, be sure of that."

"What would you do?" she asked.

"What! A world of things. We'd dress finely—you and I, I mean; not Grip—keep horses, dogs, wear bright colours and feathers, do no more work, live delicately and at our ease. Oh! we'd find uses for it, mother, and uses that would do us good. I would I knew where gold was buried. How hard I'd work to dig it up!"

"You do not know," said his mother, rising from her seat, and laying her hand upon his shoulder, "what men have done to win it, and how they have found, too late, that it glitters brightest at a distance, and turns quite dim and dull when handled."

"Ay, ay; so you say; so you think," he answered, still looking eagerly in the same direction. "For all that, mother, I should like to try."

"Do you not see," she said, "how red it is? Nothing bears so many stains of blood as gold. Avoid it. None have such cause to hate its name as we have. Do not so much as think of it, dear love. It has brought such misery and suffering on your head and mine as few have known, and God grant few may have to undergo. I would rather we were dead and laid down in our graves, than you should ever come to love it."

For a moment Barnaby withdrew his eyes, and looked at her with wonder. Then, glancing



from the redness in the sky to the mark upon his wrist, as if he would compare the two, he seemed about to question her with earnestness, when a new object caught his wandering attention, and made him quite forgetful of his purpose.

This was a man with dusty feet and garments, who stood, bareheaded, behind the hedge that divided their patch of garden from the pathway, and leant meekly forward as if he sought to mingle with their conversation, and waited for his time to speak. His face was turned towards the brightness, too, but the light that fell upon it showed that he was blind, and saw it not.

"A blessing on those voices!" said the wayfarer. "I feel the beauty of the night more keenly when I hear them. They are like eyes to me. Will they speak again, and cheer the heart of a poor traveller?"

"Have you no guide?" asked the widow after a moment's pause.

"None but that," he answered, pointing with his staff towards the sun; "and sometimes a milder one at night, but she is idle now."

"Have you travelled far?"

"A weary way and long," rejoined the traveller as he shook his head. "A weary, weary way. I struck my stick just now upon the bucket of your well—be pleased to let me have a draught of water, lady."

"Why do you call me lady?" she returned.

"I am as poor as you."

"Your speech is soft and gentle, and I judge by that," replied the man. "The coarsest stuffs and finest silks are—apart from the sense of touch—alike to me. I cannot judge you by your dress."

"Come round this way," said Barnaby, who had passed out at the garden-gate, and now stood close beside him. "Put your hand in mine. You're blind, and always in the dark, eh? Are you frightened in the dark? Do you see great crowds of faces, now? Do they grin and chatter?"

"Alas!" returned the other, "I see nothing. Waking or sleeping, nothing."

Barnaby looked curiously at his eyes, and touching them with his fingers, as an inquisitive child might, led him towards the house.

"You have come a long distance," said the widow, meeting him at the door. "How have you found your way so far?"

"Use and necessity are good teachers, as I have heard—the best of any," said the blind man, sitting down upon the chair to which Barnaby had led him, and putting his hat and stick upon the red-tiled floor. "May neither

you nor your son ever learn under them! They are rough masters."

"You have wandered from the road, too," said the widow in a tone of pity.

"Maybe, maybe," returned the blind man with a sigh, and yet with something of a smile upon his face, "that's likely. Hand-posts and milestones are dumb indeed to me. Thank you the more for this rest, and this refreshing drink!"

As he spoke, he raised the mug of water to his mouth. It was clear, and cold, and sparkling, but not to his taste, nevertheless, or his thirst was not very great, for he only wetted his lips, and put it down again.

He wore, hanging with a long strap round his neck, a kind of scrip or wallet, in which to carry food. The widow set some bread and cheese before him, but he thanked her, and said that through the kindness of the charitable he had broken his fast once since morning, and was not hungry. When he had made her this reply, he opened his wallet, and took out a few pence, which was all it appeared to contain.

"Might I make bold to ask," he said, turning towards where Barnaby stood looking on, "that one who has the gift of sight would lay this out for me in bread to keep me on my way? Heaven's blessing on the young feet that will bestir themselves in aid of one so helpless as a sightless man!"

Barnaby looked at his mother, who nodded assent; in another moment he was gone upon his charitable errand. The blind man sat listening with an attentive face until long after the sound of his retreating footsteps was inaudible to the widow, and then said suddenly, and in a very altered tone:

"There are various degrees and kinds of blindness, widow. There is the connubial blindness, ma'am, which perhaps you may have observed in the course of your own experience, and which is a kind of wilful and self-bandaging blindness. There is the blindness of party, ma'am, and public men, which is the blindness of a mad bull in the midst of a regiment of soldiers clothed in red. There is the blind confidence of youth, which is the blindness of young kittens, whose eyes have not yet opened on the world; and there is that physical blindness, ma'am, of which I am, contrary to my own desire, a most illustrious example. Added to these, ma'am, is that blindness of the intellect, of which we have a specimen in your interesting son, and which, having sometimes glimmerings and dawnings of the light, is scarcely to be trusted as a total darkness. Therefore, ma'am,

I have taken the liberty to get him out of the way for a short time, while you and I confer together, and this precaution arising out of the delicacy of my sentiments towards yourself, you will excuse me, ma'am, I know."

Having delivered himself of this speech with many flourishes of manner, he drew from beneath his coat a flat stone bottle, and holding the cork between his teeth, qualified his mug of water with a plentiful infusion of the liquor it contained. He politely drained the bumper to her health, and the ladies, and setting it down empty, smacked his lips with infinite relish.

"I am a citizen of the world, ma'am," said the blind man, corking his bottle, "and if I seem to conduct myself with freedom, it is therefore. You wonder who I am, ma'am, and what has brought me here. Such experience of human nature as I have, leads me to that conclusion, without the aid of eyes by which to read the movements of your soul as depicted in your feminine features. I will satisfy your curiosity immediately, ma'am; im-mediately." With that he slapped his bottle on its broad back, and having put it under his garment as before, crossed his legs and folded his hands, and settled himself in his chair, previous to proceeding any further.

The change in his manner was so unexpected, the craft and wickedness of his deportment were so much aggravated by his condition—for we are accustomed to see, in those who have lost a human sense, something in its place almost divine—and this alteration bred so many fears in her whom he addressed, that she could not pronounce one word. After waiting, as it seemed, for some remark or answer, and waiting in vain, the visitor resumed:

"Madam, my name is Stagg. A friend of mine, who has desired the honour of meeting with you any time these five years past, has commissioned me to call upon you. I should be glad to whisper that gentleman's name in your ear.—Zounds, ma'am, are you deaf? Do you hear me say that I should be glad to whisper my friend's name in your ear?"

"You need not repeat it," said the widow with a stifled groan; "I see too well from whom you come."

"But as a man of honour, ma'am," said the blind man, striking himself on the breast, "whose credentials must not be disputed, I take leave to say that I *will* mention that gentleman's name. Ay, ay," he added, seeming to catch with his quick ear the very motion of her hand, "but not aloud. With your leave, ma'am, I desire the favour of a whisper."

She moved towards him, and stooped down. He muttered a word in her ear; and, wringing her hands, she paced up and down the room like one distracted. The blind man, with perfect composure, produced his bottle again; mixed another glassful; put it up as before; and, drinking from time to time, followed her with his face in silence.

"You are slow in conversation, widow," he said after a time, pausing in his draught. "We shall have to talk before your son."

"What would you have me do?" she answered. "What do you want?"

"We are poor, widow, we are poor," he retorted, stretching out his right hand, and rubbing his thumb upon its palm.

"Poor!" she cried. "And what am I?"

"Comparisons are odious," said the blind man. "I don't know, I don't care. I say that we are poor. My friend's circumstances are indifferent, and so are mine. We must have our rights, widow, or we must be bought off. But you know that as well as I, so where is the use of talking?"

She still walked wildly to and fro. At length, stopping abruptly before him, she said:

"Is he near here?"

"He is. Close at hand."

"Then I am lost!"

"Not lost, widow," said the blind man calmly; "only found. Shail I call him?"

"Not for the world," she answered with a shudder.

"Very good," he replied, crossing his legs again, for he had made as though he would rise and walk to the door. "As you please, widow. His presence is not necessary that I know of. But both he and I must live; to live, we must eat and drink; to eat and drink, we must have money:—I say no more."

"Do you know how pinched and destitute I am?" she retorted. "I do not think you do, or can. If you had eyes, and could look around you on this poor place, you would have pity on me. Oh! let your heart be softened by your own affliction, friend, and have some sympathy with mine."

The blind man snapped his fingers as he answered:

"Beside the question, ma'am, beside the question. I have the softest heart in the world, but I can't live upon it. Many a gentleman lives well upon a soft head, who would find a heart of the same quality a very great drawback. Listen to me. This is a matter of business, with which sympathies and sentiments have nothing to do. As a mutual friend, I wish to







“THEN, SEATING HIMSELF UNDER A SPREADING HONEYSUCKLE, AND STRETCHING HIS LEGS ACROSS THE THRESHOLD SO THAT NO PERSON COULD PASS IN OR OUT WITHOUT HIS KNOWLEDGE, HE TOOK FROM HIS POCKET A PIPE, FLINT, STEEL, AND TINDER-BOX, AND BEGAN TO SMOKE.”—P. 177.



arrange it in a satisfactory manner, if possible ; and thus the case stands.—If you are very poor now, it's your own choice. You have friends who, in case of need, are always ready to help you. My friend is in a more destitute and desolate situation than most men, and you and he being linked together in a common cause, he naturally looks to you to assist him. He has boarded and lodged with me a long time (for, as I said just now, I am very soft-hearted), and I quite approve of his entertaining this opinion. You have always had a roof over your head ; he has always been an outcast. You have your son to comfort and assist you ; he has nobody at all. The advantages must not be all one side. You are in the same boat, and we must divide the ballast a little more equally."

She was about to speak, but he checked her, and went on.

"The only way of doing this is by making up a little purse now and then for my friend ; and that's what I advise. He bears you no malice that I know of, ma'am : so little, that although you have treated him harshly more than once, and driven him, I may say, out of doors, he has that regard for you that I believe, even if you disappointed him now, he would consent to take charge of your son, and to make a man of him."

He laid a great stress on these latter words, and paused as if to find out what effect they had produced. She only answered by her tears.

"He is a likely lad," said the blind man thoughtfully, "for many purposes, and not ill disposed to try his fortune in a little change and bustle, if I may judge from what I heard of his talk with you to-night.—Come. In a word, my friend has pressing necessity for twenty pounds. You, who can give up an annuity, can get that sum for him. It's a pity you should be troubled. You seem very comfortable here, and it's worth that much to remain so. Twenty pounds, widow, is a moderate demand. You know where to apply for it ; a post will bring it you.—Twenty pounds !"

She was about to answer him again, but again he stopped her.

"Don't say anything hastily ; you might be sorry for it. Think of it a little while. Twenty pounds—of other people's money—how easy ! Turn it over in your mind. I'm in no hurry. Night's coming on, and if I don't sleep here, I shall not go far. Twenty pounds ! Consider of it, ma'am, for twenty minutes ; give each pound a minute ; that's a fair allowance. I'll enjoy the air the while, which is very mild and pleasant in these parts."

With these words, he groped his way to the door, carrying his chair with him. Then, seating himself under a spreading honeysuckle, and stretching his legs across the threshold so that no person could pass in or out without his knowledge, he took from his pocket a pipe, flint, steel, and tinder-box, and began to smoke. It was a lovely evening, of that gentle kind, and at that time of year, when the twilight is most beautiful. Pausing now and then to let his smoke curl slowly off, and to sniff the grateful fragrance of the flowers, he sat there at his ease—as though the cottage were his proper dwelling, and he had held undisputed possession of it all his life—waiting for the widow's answer and for Barnaby's return.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

**W**HEN Barnaby returned with the bread, the sight of the pious old pilgrim smoking his pipe, and making himself so thoroughly at home, appeared to surprise even him ; the more so as that worthy person, instead of putting up the loaf in his wallet as a scarce and precious article, tossed it carelessly on the table, and, producing his bottle, bade him sit down and drink.

"For I carry some comfort you see," he said. "Taste that. Is it good ?"

The water stood in Barnaby's eyes as he coughed from the strength of the draught, and answered in the affirmative.

"Drink some more," said the blind man ; "don't be afraid of it. You don't taste anything like that often, eh ?"

"Often !" cried Barnaby. "Never !"

"Too poor ?" returned the blind man with a sigh. "Ay. That's bad. Your mother, poor soul, would be happier if she was richer, Barnaby."

"Why, so I tell her—the very thing I told her just before you came to-night, when all that gold was in the sky," said Barnaby, drawing his chair nearer to him, and looking eagerly in his face. "Tell me. Is there any way of being rich, that I could find out ?"

"Any way ! A hundred ways."

"Ay, ay ?" he returned. "Do you say so ? What are they ?—Nay, mother, it's for your sake I ask ; not mine ;—for yours, indeed. What are they ?"

The blind man turned his face, on which

there was a smile of triumph, to where the widow stood in great distress; and answered,

"Why, they are not to be found out by stay-at-homes, my good friend."

"By stay-at-homes!" cried Barnaby, plucking at his sleeve. "But I am not one. Now, there you mistake. I am often out before the sun, and travel home when he has gone to rest. I am away in the woods before the day has reached the shady places, and am often there when the bright moon is peeping through the boughs, and looking down upon the other moon that lives in water. As I walk along, I try to find, among the grass and moss, some of that small money for which she works so hard and used to shed so many tears. As I lie asleep in the shade, I dream of it—dream of digging it up in heaps; and spying it out, hidden under bushes; and seeing it sparkle, as the dewdrops do, among the leaves. But I never find it. Tell me where it is. I'd go there, if the journey were a whole year long, because I know she would be happier when I came home and brought some with me. Speak again. I'll listen to you if you talk all night."

The blind man passed his hand lightly over the poor fellow's face, and finding that his elbows were planted on the table, that his chin rested on his two hands, that he leaned eagerly forward, and that his whole manner expressed the utmost interest and anxiety, paused for a minute as though he desired the widow to observe this fully, and then made answer:

"It's in the world, bold Barnaby, the merry world; not in solitary places like those you pass your time in, but in crowds, and where there's noise and rattle."

"Good! good!" cried Barnaby, rubbing his hands. "Yes! I love that. Grip loves it too. It suits us both. That's brave!"

"—The kind of places," said the blind man, "that a young fellow likes, and in which a good son may do more for his mother, and himself to boot, in a month, than he could here in all his life—that is, if he had a friend, you know, and some one to advise with."

"You hear this, mother?" cried Barnaby, turning to her with delight. "Never tell me we shouldn't heed it, if it lay shining at our feet. Why do we heed it so much now? Why do you toil from morning until night?"

"Surely," said the blind man, "surely. Have you no answer, widow? Is your mind," he slowly added, "not made up yet?"

"Let me speak with you," she answered, "apart."

"Lay your hand upon my sleeve," said Stagg,

rising from the table; "and lead me where you will. Courage, bold Barnaby. We'll talk more of this: I've a fancy for you. Wait there till I come back. Now, widow."

She led him out at the door, and into the little garden, where they stopped.

"You are a fit agent," she said in a half-breathless manner, "and well represent the man who sent you here."

"I'll tell him that you said so," Stagg retorted. "He has a regard for you, and will respect me the more (if possible) for your praise. We must have our rights, widow."

"Rights! Do you know," she said, "that a word from me—"

"Why do you stop?" returned the blind man calmly, after a long pause. "Do I know that a word from you would place my friend in the last position of the dance of life? Yes, I do. What of that? It will never be spoken, widow."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite—so sure, that I don't come here to discuss the question. I say we must have our rights, or we must be bought off. Keep to that point, or let me return to my young friend, for I have an interest in the lad, and desire to put him in the way of making his fortune. Bah! you needn't speak," he added hastily; "I know what you would say: you have hinted at it once already. Have I no feeling for you, because I am blind? No, I have not. Why do you expect me, being in darkness, to be better than men who have their sight—why should you? Is the hand of Heaven more manifest in my having no eyes than in your having two? It's the cant of you folks to be horrified if a blind man robs, or lies, or steals; oh yes, it's far worse in him, who can barely live on the few halfpence that are thrown to him in streets, than in you, who can see, and work, and are not dependent on the mercies of the world. A curse on you! You who have five senses may be wicked at your pleasure; we who have four, and want the most important, are to live and be moral on our affliction. The true charity and justice of rich to poor, all the world over!"

He paused a moment when he had said these words, and caught the sound of money jingling in her hand.

"Well?" he cried, quickly resuming his former manner. "That should lead to something. The point, widow!"

"First answer me one question," she replied. "You say he is close at hand. Has he left London?"

"Being close at hand, widow, it would seem he has," returned the blind man.



"I mean for good. You know that."

"Yes, for good. The truth is, widow, that his making a longer stay there might have had disagreeable consequences. He has come away for that reason."

"Listen," said the widow, telling some money out upon a bench beside them. "Count."

"Six," said the blind man, listening attentively. "Any more?"

"They are the savings," she answered, "of five years. Six guineas."

He put out his hand for one of the coins; felt it carefully, put it between his teeth, rung it on the bench; and nodded to her to proceed.

"These have been scraped together and laid by, lest sickness or death should separate my son and me. They have been purchased at the price of much hunger, hard labour, and want of rest. If you *can* take them—do—on condition that you leave this place upon the instant, and enter no more into that room, where he sits now, expecting your return."

"Six guineas," said the blind man, shaking his head, "though of the fullest weight that were ever coined, fall very far short of twenty pounds, widow."

"For such a sum, as you know, I must write to a distant part of the country. To do that, and receive an answer, I must have time."

"Two days?" said Stagg.

"More."

"Four days?"

"A week. Return on this day week, at the same hour, but not to the house. Wait at the corner of the lane."

"Of course," said the blind man with a crafty look, "I shall find you there?"

"Where else can I take refuge? Is it not enough that you have made a beggar of me, and that I have sacrificed my whole store, so hardly earned, to preserve this home?"

"Humph!" said the blind man after some consideration. "Set me with my face towards the point you speak of, and in the middle of the road. Is this the spot?"

"It is."

"On this day week at sunset. And think of him within doors.—For the present, good night."

She made him no answer, nor did he stop for any. He went slowly away, turning his head from time to time, and stopping to listen, as if he were curious to know whether he was watched by any one. The shadows of night were closing fast around, and he was soon lost in the gloom. It was not, however, until she had traversed the lane from end to end, and made sure that he

was gone, that she re-entered the cottage, and hurriedly barred the door and window.

"Mother!" said Barnaby. "What is the matter? Where is the blind man?"

"He is gone."

"Gone!" he cried, starting up. "I must have more talk with him. Which way did he take?"

"I don't know," she answered, folding her arms about him. "You must not go out to-night. There are ghosts and dreams abroad."

"Ay?" said Barnaby in a frightened whisper.

"It is not safe to stir. We must leave this place to-morrow."

"This place! This cottage—and the little garden, mother!"

"Yes! To-morrow morning at sunrise. We must travel to London; lose ourselves in that wide place—there would be some trace of us in any other town—then travel on again, and find some new abode."

Little persuasion was required to reconcile Barnaby to anything that promised change. In another minute he was wild with delight; in another, full of grief at the prospect of parting with his friends the dogs; in another, wild again; then he was fearful of what she had said to prevent his wandering abroad that night, and full of terrors and strange questions. His light-heartedness in the end surmounted all his other feelings, and lying down in his clothes, to the end that he might be ready on the morrow, he soon fell fast asleep before the poor turf fire.

His mother did not close her eyes, but sat beside him watching. Every breath of wind sounded in her ears like that dreaded footstep at the door, or like that hand upon the latch, and made the calm summer night a night of horror. At length the welcome day appeared. When she had made the little preparations which were needful for their journey, and had prayed upon her knees with many tears, she roused Barnaby, who jumped up gaily at her summons.

His clothes were few enough, and to carry Grip was a labour of love. As the sun shed his earliest beams upon the earth, they closed the door of their deserted home, and turned away. The sky was blue and bright. The air was fresh, and filled with a thousand perfumes. Barnaby looked upward, and laughed with all his heart.

But it was a day he usually devoted to a long ramble, and one of the dogs—the ugliest of them all—came bounding up, and jumping round him in the fulness of his joy. He had to bid him go back in a surly tone, and his heart smote him while he did so. The dog retreated; turned

with a half-incredulous, half-imploring look; came a little back; and stopped.

It was the last appeal of an old companion and a faithful friend—cast off. Barnaby could wear no more, and, as he shook his head and waved his playmate home, he burst into tears.

“Oh, mother, mother, how mournful he will be when he scratches at the door, and finds it always shut!”

There was such a sense of home in the thought, that though her own eyes overflowed, she would not have obliterated the recollection of it, either from her own mind or from his, for the wealth of the whole wide world.

## CHAPTER XLVII.



IN the exhaustless catalogue of Heaven's mercies to mankind, the power we have of finding some germs of comfort in the hardest trials must ever occupy the foremost place; not only because it supports and upholds us when we most require to be sustained, but because in this source of consolation there is something, we have reason to believe, of the divine spirit; something of that goodness which detects, amidst our own evil-doings, a redeeming quality; something which, even in our fallen nature, we possess in common with the angels; which had its being in the old time when they trod the earth, and lingers on it yet in pity.

How often, on their journey, did the widow remember with a grateful heart that out of his deprivation Barnaby's cheerfulness and affection sprung! How often did she call to mind that, but for that, he might have been sullen, morose, unkind, far removed from her—vicious, perhaps, and cruel! How often had she cause for comfort in his strength and hope, and in his simple nature! Those feeble powers of mind which rendered him so soon forgetful of the past, save in brief gleams and flashes,—even they were a comfort now. The world to him was full of happiness; in every tree, and plant, and flower, in every bird, and beast, and tiny insect whom a breath of summer wind laid low upon the ground, he had delight. His delight was hers; and where many a wise son would have made her sorrowful, this poor light-hearted idiot filled her breast with thankfulness and love.

Their stock of money was low, but from the hoard she had told into the blind man's hand the widow had withheld one guinea. This, with

the few pence she possessed besides, was, to two persons of their frugal habits, a goodly sum in bank. Moreover, they had Grip in company; and when they must otherwise have changed the guinea, it was but to make him exhibit outside an alehouse door, or in a village street, or in the grounds or gardens of a mansion of the better sort, and scores, who would have given nothing in charity, were ready to bargain for more amusement from the talking bird.

One day—for they moved slowly, and, although they had many rides in carts and waggons, were on the road a week—Barnaby, with Grip upon his shoulder and his mother following, begged permission at a trim lodge to go up to the great house, at the other end of the avenue, and show his raven. The man within was inclined to give them admittance, and was indeed about to do so, when a stout gentleman with a long whip in his hand, and a flushed face which seemed to indicate that he had had his morning's draught, rode up to the gate, and called in a loud voice, and with more oaths than the occasion seemed to warrant, to have it opened directly.

“Who hast thou got here?” said the gentleman angrily, as the man threw the gate wide open, and pulled off his hat. “Who are these? Eh? Art a beggar, woman?”

The widow answered, with a curtsy, that they were poor travellers.

“Vagrants,” said the gentleman, “vagrants and vagabonds. Thee wish to be made acquainted with the cage, dost thee—the cage, the stocks, and the whipping-post? Where dost come from?”

She told him in a timid manner, for he was very loud, hoarse, and red-faced,—and besought him not to be angry, for they meant no harm, and would go upon their way that moment.

“Don't be too sure of that,” replied the gentleman; “we don't allow vagrants to roam about this place. I know what thou want'st—stray linen drying on hedges, and stray poultry, eh? What hast got in that basket, lazy hound?”

“Grip, Grip, Grip—Grip the clever, Grip the wicked, Grip the knowing—Grip, Grip, Grip!” cried the raven, whom Barnaby had shut up on the approach of this stern personage. “I'm a devil I'm a devil I'm a devil, Never say die Hurrah Bow wow wow, Polly put the kettle on we'll all have tea.”

“Take the virmin out, scoundrel,” said the gentleman, “and let me see him.”

Barnaby, thus condescendingly addressed, produced his bird, but not without much fear



and trembling, and set him down upon the ground; which he had no sooner done than Grip drew fifty corks at least, and then began to dance; at the same time eyeing the gentleman with surprising insolence of manner, and screwing his head so much on one side that he appeared desirous of screwing it off upon the spot.

The cork-drawing seemed to make a greater impression on the gentleman's mind than the raven's power of speech, and was, indeed, particularly adapted to his habits and capacity. He desired to have that done again, but despite his being very peremptory, and notwithstanding that Barnaby coaxed to the utmost, Grip turned a deaf ear to the request, and preserved a dead silence.

"Bring him along," said the gentleman, pointing to the house. But Grip, who had watched the action, anticipated his master by hopping on before them; constantly flapping his wings, and screaming "Cook!" meanwhile, as a hint perhaps that there was company coming, and a small collation would be acceptable.

Barnaby and his mother walked on, on either side of the gentleman on horseback, who surveyed each of them from time to time in a proud and coarse manner, and occasionally thundered out some question, the tone of which alarmed Barnaby so much that he could find no answer, and, as a matter of course, could make him no reply. On one of these occasions, when the gentleman appeared disposed to exercise his horsewhip, the widow ventured to inform him in a low voice, and with tears in her eyes, that her son was of weak mind.

"An idiot, eh?" said the gentleman, looking at Barnaby as he spoke. "And how long hast been an idiot?"

"She knows," was Barnaby's timid answer, pointing to his mother. "I—always, I believe."

"From his birth," said the widow.

"I don't believe it," cried the gentleman, "not a bit of it. It's an excuse not to work. There's nothing like flogging to cure that disorder. I'd make a difference in him in ten minutes, I'll be bound."

"Heaven has made none in more than twice ten years, sir," said the widow mildly.

"Then why don't you shut him up? We pay enough for county institutions, damn 'em. But thou'd rather drag him about to excite charity—of course. Ay, I know thee."

Now this gentleman had various endearing appellations among his intimate friends. By some he was called "a country gentleman of the true school," by some "a fine old country gentle-

BARNABY RUDGE, 13.

man," by some "a sporting gentleman," by some "a thorough-bred Englishman," by some "a genuine John Bull;" but they all agreed in one respect, and that was, that it was a pity there were not more like him, and that, because there were not, the country was going to rack and ruin every day. He was in the commission of the peace, and could write his name almost legibly; but his greatest qualifications were, that he was more severe with poachers, was a better shot, a harder rider, had better horses, kept better dogs, could eat more solid food, drink more strong wine, go to bed every night more drunk and get up every morning more sober, than any man in the county. In knowledge of horse-flesh he was almost equal to a farrier, in stable learning he surpassed his own head groom, and in gluttony not a pig on his estate was a match for him. He had no seat in Parliament himself, but he was extremely patriotic, and usually drove his voters up to the poll with his own hands. He was warmly attached to church and state, and never appointed to the living in his gift any but a three-bottle man and a first-rate fox-hunter. He mistrusted the honesty of all poor people who could read and write, and had a secret jealousy of his own wife (a young lady whom he had married for what his friends called "the good old English reason," that her father's property adjoined his own) for possessing those accomplishments in a greater degree than himself. In short, Barnaby being an idiot, and Grip a creature of mere brute instinct, it would be very hard to say what this gentleman was.

He rode up to the door of a handsome house approached by a great flight of steps, where a man was waiting to take his horse, and led the way into a large hall, which, spacious as it was, was tainted with the fumes of last night's stale debauch. Great-coats, riding whips, bridles, top-boots, spurs, and such gear, were strewn about on all sides, and formed, with some huge stags' antlers and a few portraits of dogs and horses, its principal embellishments.

Throwing himself into a great chair (in which, by-the-by, he often snored away the night, when he had been, according to his admirers, a finer country gentleman than usual), he bade the man tell his mistress to come down: and presently there appeared, a little flurried, as it seemed, by the unwonted summons, a lady much younger than himself, who had the appearance of being in delicate health, and not too happy.

"Here! Thou'st no delight in following the hounds as an Englishwoman should have," said the gentleman. "See to this here. That'll please thee perhaps."

The lady smiled, sat down at a little distance from him, and glanced at Barnaby with a look of pity.

"He's an idiot, the woman says," observed the gentleman, shaking his head; "I don't believe it."

"Are you his mother?" asked the lady.

She answered yes.

"What's the use of asking *her*?" said the gentleman, thrusting his hands into his breeches pockets. "She'll tell thee so, of course. Most likely he's hired at so much a day. There. Get on. Make him do something."

Grip, having by this time recovered his urbanity, condescended, at Barnaby's solicitation, to repeat his various phrases of speech, and to go through the whole of his performances with the utmost success. The corks, and the never say die, afforded the gentleman so much delight that he demanded the repetition of this part of the entertainment, until Grip got into his basket, and positively refused to say another word, good or bad. The lady, too, was much amused with him; and the closing point of his obstinacy so delighted her husband that he burst into a roar of laughter, and demanded his price.

Barnaby looked as though he didn't understand his meaning. Probably he did not.

"His price," said the gentleman, rattling the money in his pockets. "What dost want for him? How much?"

"He's not to be sold," replied Barnaby, shutting up the basket in a great hurry, and throwing the strap over his shoulder. "Mother, come away."

"Thou seest how much of an idiot he is, book-learner," said the gentleman, looking scornfully at his wife. "He can make a bargain. What dost want for him, old woman?"

"He is my son's constant companion," said the widow. "He is not to be sold, sir, indeed."

"Not to be sold!" cried the gentleman, growing ten times redder, hoarser, and louder than before. "Not to be sold!"

"Indeed, no," she answered. "We have never thought of parting with him, sir, I do assure you."

He was evidently about to make a very passionate retort, when a few murmured words from his wife happening to catch his ear, he turned sharply round, and said, "Eh? What?"

"We can hardly expect them to sell the bird against their own desire," she faltered. "If they prefer to keep him——"

"Prefer to keep him!" he echoed. "These people, who go tramping about the country, a

pilfering and vagabondising on all hands, prefer to keep a bird, when a landed proprietor and a justice asks his price! That old woman's been to school. I know she has. Don't tell me no," he roared to the widow; "I say, yes."

Barnaby's mother pleaded guilty to the accusation, and hoped there was no harm in it.

"No harm!" said the gentleman. "No. No harm. No harm, ye old rebel, not a bit of harm! If my clerk was here, I'd set ye in the stocks, I would, or lay ye in gaol for prowling up and down, on the look-out for petty larcenies, ye limb of a gipsy! Here, Simon, put these pilferers out, shove 'em into the road, out with 'em! Ye don't want to sell the bird, ye that come here to beg, don't ye? If they an't out in double-quick, set the dogs upon 'em!"

They waited for no further dismissal, but fled precipitately, leaving the gentleman to storm away by himself (for the poor lady had already retreated), and making a great many vain attempts to silence Grip, who, excited by the noise, drew corks enough for a City feast as they hurried down the avenue, and appeared to congratulate himself beyond measure on having been the cause of the disturbance. When they had nearly reached the lodge, another servant, emerging from the shrubbery, feigned to be very active in ordering them off, but this man put a crown into the widow's hand, and whispering that his lady sent it, thrust them gently from the gate.

This incident only suggested to the widow's mind, when they halted at an alehouse some miles further on, and heard the justice's character as given by his friends, that perhaps something more than capacity of stomach and tastes for the kennel and the stable was required to form either a perfect country gentleman, a thorough-bred Englishman, or a genuine John Bull; and that possibly the terms were sometimes misappropriated, not to say disgraced. She little thought then that a circumstance so slight would ever influence their future fortunes; but time and experience enlightened her in this respect.

"Mother," said Barnaby as they were sitting next day in a waggon which was to take them to within ten miles of the capital, "we're going to London first, you said. Shall we see that blind man there?"

She was about to answer "Heaven forbid!" but checked herself, and told him No, she thought not; why did he ask?

"He's a wise man," said Barnaby with a thoughtful countenance. "I wish that we may meet with him again. What was it that he said of crowds? That gold was to be found where



people crowded, and not among the trees and in such quiet places? He spoke as if he loved it. London is a crowded place; I think we shall meet him there."

"But why do you desire to see him, love?" she asked.

"Because," said Barnaby, looking wistfully at her, "he talked to me about gold, which is a rare thing, and say what you will, a thing you would like to have, I know. And because he came and went away so strangely—just as white-headed old men come sometimes to my bed's foot in the night, and say what I can't remember when the bright day returns. He told me he'd come back. I wonder why he broke his word!"

"But you never thought of being rich or gay before, dear Barnaby. You have always been contented."

He laughed, and bade her say that again; then cried, "Ay, ay—oh yes!" and laughed once more. Then something passed that caught his fancy, and the topic wandered from his mind, and was succeeded by another just as fleeting.

But it was plain from what he had said, and from his returning to the point more than once that day, and on the next, that the blind man's visit, and indeed his words, had taken strong possession of his mind. Whether the idea of wealth had occurred to him for the first time on looking at the golden clouds that evening—and images were often presented to his thoughts by outward objects quite as remote and distant; or whether their poor and humble way of life had suggested it, by contrast, long ago; or whether the accident (as he would deem it) of the blind man's pursuing the current of his own remarks had done so at the moment; or he had been impressed by the mere circumstance of the man being blind, and, therefore, unlike any one with whom he had talked before; it was impossible to tell. She tried every means to discover, but in vain: and the probability is that Barnaby himself was equally in the dark.

It filled her with uneasiness to find him harping on this string, but all that she could do was to lead him quickly to some other subject, and to dismiss it from his brain. To caution him against their visitor, to show any fear or suspicion in reference to him, would only be, she feared, to increase that interest with which Barnaby regarded him, and to strengthen his desire to meet him once again. She hoped, by plunging into the crowd, to rid herself of her terrible pursuer, and then, by journeying to a distance, and observing increased caution, if that were pos-

sible, to live again unknown, in secrecy and peace.

They reached, in course of time, their halting-place within ten miles of London, and lay there for the night, after bargaining to be carried on for a trifle next day in a light van which was returning empty, and was to start at five o'clock in the morning. The driver was punctual, the road good—save for the dust, the weather being very hot and dry—and at seven in the forenoon of Friday, the second of June, one thousand seven hundred and eighty, they alighted at the foot of Westminster Bridge, bade their conductor farewell, and stood alone, together, on the scorching pavement. For the freshness which night sheds upon such busy thoroughfares had already departed, and the sun was shining with uncommon lustre.

#### CHAPTER XLVIII.

**U**NCERTAIN where to go next, and bewildered by the crowd of people who were already astir, they sat down in one of the recesses on the bridge to rest. They soon became aware that the stream of life was all pouring one way, and that a vast throng of persons were crossing the river, from the Middlesex to the Surrey shore, in unusual haste and evident excitement. They were, for the most part, in knots of two or three, or sometimes half-a-dozen; they spoke little together—many of them were quite silent; and hurried on as if they had one absorbing object in view, which was common to them all.

They were surprised to see that nearly every man in this great concourse, which still came pouring past, without slackening in the least, wore in his hat a blue cockade; and that the chance passengers who were not so decorated appeared timidly anxious to escape observation or attack, and gave them the wall as if they would conciliate them. This, however, was natural enough, considering their inferiority in point of numbers; for the proportion of those who wore blue cockades, to those who were dressed as usual, was at least forty or fifty to one. There was no quarrelling, however: the blue cockades went swarming on, passing each other when they could, and making all the speed that was possible in such a multitude; and exchanged nothing more than looks, and very often not even those, with such of the passers-by as were not of their number.

At first the current of people had been confined to the two pathways, and but a few more eager stragglers kept the road. But, after half an hour or so, the passage was completely blocked up by the great press, which, being now closely wedged together, and impeded by the carts and coaches it encountered, moved but slowly, and was sometimes at a stand for five or ten minutes together.

After the lapse of nearly two hours, the numbers began to diminish visibly, and gradually dwindling away by little and little, left the bridge quite clear, save that, now and then, some hot and dusty man with the cockade in his hat, and his coat thrown over his shoulder, went panting by, fearful of being too late, or stopped to ask which way his friends had taken, and being directed, hastened on again like one refreshed. In this comparative solitude, which seemed quite strange and novel after the late crowd, the widow had for the first time an opportunity of inquiring, of an old man who came and sat beside them, what was the meaning of that great assemblage.

"Why, where have you come from," he returned, "that you haven't heard of Lord George Gordon's great Association? This is the day that he presents the petition against the Catholics, God bless him!"

"What have all these men to do with that?" she asked.

"What have they to do with it!" the old man replied. "Why, how you talk! Don't you know his lordship has declared he won't present it to the House at all, unless it is attended to the door by forty thousand good and true men at least? There's a crowd for you!"

"A crowd indeed!" said Barnaby. "Do you hear that, mother?"

"And they're mustering yonder, as I am told," resumed the old man, "nigh upon a hundred thousand strong. Ah! Let Lord George alone. He knows his power. There'll be a good many faces inside them three windows over there," and he pointed to where the House of Commons overlooked the river, "that'll turn pale when good Lord George gets up this afternoon, and with reason too! Ay, ay. Let his lordship alone. Let him alone. *He* knows!" And so, with much mumbling and chuckling and shaking of his forefinger, he rose, with the assistance of his stick, and tottered off.

"Mother!" said Barnaby, "that's a brave crowd he talks of. Come!"

"Not to join it!" cried his mother.

"Yes, yes," he answered, plucking at her sleeve. "Why not? Come!"

"You don't know," she urged, "what mischief they may do, where they may lead you, what their meaning is. Dear Barnaby, for my sake——"

"For your sake!" he cried, patting her hand. "Well! It *is* for your sake, mother. You remember what the blind man said about the gold. Here's a brave crowd! Come! Or wait till I come back—yes, yes, wait here."

She tried, with all the earnestness her fears engendered, to turn him from his purpose, but in vain. He was stooping down to buckle on his shoe, when a hackney coach passed them rather quickly, and a voice inside called to the driver to stop.

"Young man," said a voice within.

"Who's that?" cried Barnaby, looking up.

"Do you wear this ornament?" returned the stranger, holding out a blue cockade.

"In Heaven's name, no. Pray do not give it him!" exclaimed the widow.

"Speak for yourself, woman," said the man within the coach coldly. "Leave the young man to his choice; he's old enough to make it, and to snap your apron-strings. He knows, without your telling, whether he wears the sign of a loyal Englishman or not."

Barnaby, trembling with impatience, cried, "Yes! yes, yes, I do," as he had cried a dozen times already. The man threw him a cockade, and crying, "Make haste to St. George's Fields," ordered the coachman to drive on fast; and left them.

With hands that trembled with his eagerness to fix the bauble in his hat, Barnaby was adjusting it as he best could, and hurriedly replying to the tears and entreaties of his mother, when two gentlemen passed on the opposite side of the way. Observing them, and seeing how Barnaby was occupied, they stopped, whispered together for an instant, turned back, and came over to them.

"Why are you sitting here?" said one of them, who was dressed in a plain suit of black, wore long lank hair, and carried a great cane. "Why have you not gone with the rest?"

"I am going, sir," replied Barnaby, finishing his task, and putting his hat on with an air of pride. "I shall be there directly."

"Say 'my lord,' young man, when his lordship does you the honour of speaking to you," said the second gentleman mildly. "If you don't know Lord George Gordon when you see him, it's high time you should."

"Nay, Gashford," said Lord George, as Barnaby pulled off his hat again and made him a low bow, "it's no great matter on a day like



this, which every Englishman will remember with delight and pride. Put on your hat, friend, and follow us, for you lag behind and are late. It's past ten now. Didn't you know that the hour of assembling was ten o'clock?"

Barnaby shook his head, and looked vacantly from one to the other.

"You might have known it, friend," said Gashford; "it was perfectly understood. How came you to be so ill informed?"

"He cannot tell you, sir," the widow interposed. "It's of no use to ask him. We are but this morning come from a long distance in the country, and know nothing of these matters."

"The cause has taken a deep root, and has spread its branches far and wide," said Lord George to his secretary. "This is a pleasant hearing. I thank Heaven for it."

"Amen!" cried Gashford with a solemn face.

"You do not understand me, my lord," said the widow. "Pardon me, but you cruelly mistake my meaning. We know nothing of these matters. We have no desire or right to join in what you are about to do. This is my son, my poor afflicted son, dearer to me than my own life. In mercy's name, my lord, go your way alone, and do not tempt him into danger!"

"My good woman," said Gashford, "how can you?—Dear me! What do you mean by tempting, and by danger? Do you think his lordship is a roaring lion, going about and seeking whom he may devour? God bless me!"

"No, no, my lord, forgive me," implored the widow, laying both her hands upon his breast, and scarcely knowing what she did, or said, in the earnestness of her supplication, "but there are reasons why you should hear my earnest, mother's prayer, and leave my son with me. Oh, do! He is not in his right senses, he is not, indeed!"

"It is a bad sign of the wickedness of these times," said Lord George, evading her touch, and colouring deeply, "that those who cling to the truth and support the right cause are set down as mad. Have you the heart to say this of your own son, unnatural mother?"

"I am astonished at you!" said Gashford with a kind of meek severity. "This is a very sad picture of female depravity."

"He has surely no appearance," said Lord George, glancing at Barnaby, and whispering in his secretary's ear, "of being deranged? And even if he had, we must not construe any trifling peculiarity into madness. Which of us"

—and here he turned red again—"would be safe, if that were made the law?"

"Not one," replied the secretary; "in that case, the greater the zeal, the truth, and talent; the more direct the call from above; the clearer would be the madness. With regard to this young man, my lord," he added, with a lip that slightly curled as he looked at Barnaby, who stood twirling his hat, and stealthily beckoning them to come away, "he is as sensible and self-possessed as any one I ever saw."

"And you desire to make one of this great body?" said Lord George, addressing him; "and intended to make one, did you?"

"Yes—yes," said Barnaby with sparkling eyes. "To be sure I did! I told her so myself."

"I see," replied Lord George, with a reproachful glance at the unhappy mother. "I thought so. Follow me and this gentleman, and you shall have your wish."

Barnaby kissed his mother tenderly on the cheek, and bidding her be of good cheer, for their fortunes were both made now, did as he was desired. She, poor woman, followed too—with how much fear and grief it would be hard to tell.

They passed quickly through the Bridge Road, where the shops were all shut up (for the passage of the great crowd, and the expectation of their return, had alarmed the tradesmen for their goods and windows), and where, in the upper stories, all the inhabitants were congregated, looking down into the street below, with faces variously expressive of alarm, of interest, expectancy, and indignation. Some of these applauded, and some hissed; but regardless of these interruptions—for the noise of a vast congregation of people at a little distance sounded in his ears like the roaring of a sea—Lord George Gordon quickened his pace, and presently arrived before St. George's Fields.

They were really fields at that time, and of considerable extent. Here an immense multitude was collected, bearing flags of various kinds and sizes, but all of the same colour—blue, like the cockades—some sections marching to and fro in military array, and others drawn up in circles, squares, and lines. A large portion, both of the bodies which paraded the ground and of those which remained stationary, were occupied in singing hymns or psalms. With whomsoever this originated, it was well done; for the sound of so many thousand voices in the air must have stirred the heart of any man within him, and could not fail to have a wonderful effect upon enthusiasts, however mistaken.

Scouts had been posted in advance of the great body, to give notice of their leader's coming. These falling back, the word was quickly passed through the whole host, and for a short interval there ensued a profound and death-like silence, during which the mass was so still and quiet, that the fluttering of a banner caught the eye, and became a circumstance of note. Then they burst into a tremendous shout, into another, and another; and the air seemed rent and shaken, as if by the discharge of cannon.

"Gashford!" cried Lord George, pressing his secretary's arm tight within his own, and speaking with as much emotion in his voice as in his altered face, "I am called indeed now. I feel and know it. I am the leader of a host. If they summoned me at this moment with one voice to lead them on to death, I'd do it. Yes, and fall first myself!"

"It is a proud sight," said the secretary. "It is a noble day for England, and for the great cause throughout the world. Such homage, my lord, as I, a humble but devoted man, can render——"

"What are you doing?" cried his master, catching him by both hands; for he had made a show of kneeling at his feet. "Do not unfit me, dear Gashford, for the solemn duty of this glorious day." The tears stood in the eyes of the poor gentleman as he said the words.—"Let us go among them; we have to find a place in some division for this new recruit—give me your hand."

Gashford slid his cold insidious palm into his master's grasp, and so, hand-in-hand, and followed still by Barnaby, and by his mother too, they mingled with the concourse.

They had by this time taken to their singing again, and, as their leader passed between their ranks, they raised their voices to their utmost. Many of those who were banded together to support the religion of their country, even unto death, had never heard a hymn or psalm in all their lives. But these fellows having for the most part strong lungs, and being naturally fond of singing, chanted any ribaldry or nonsense that occurred to them, feeling pretty certain that it would not be detected in the general chorus, and not caring very much if it were. Many of these voluntaries were sung under the very nose of Lord George Gordon, who, quite unconscious of their burden, passed on with his usual stiff and solemn deportment, very much edified and delighted by the pious conduct of his followers.

So they went on and on, up this line, down that, round the exterior of this circle, and on every side of that hollow square; and still there

were lines, and squares, and circles out of number to review. The day being now intensely hot, and the sun striking down his fiercest rays upon the field, those who carried heavy banners began to grow faint and weary; most of the number assembled were fain to pull off their neckcloths, and throw their coats and waistcoats open; and some towards the centre, quite overpowered by the excessive heat, which was of course rendered more unendurable by the multitude around them, lay down upon the grass, and offered all they had about them for a drink of water. Still, no man left the ground, not even of those who were so distressed; still, Lord George, streaming from every pore, went on with Gashford; and still Barnaby and his mother followed close behind them.

They had arrived at the top of a long line of some eight hundred men in single file, and Lord George had turned his head to look back, when a loud cry of recognition—in that peculiar and half-stifled tone which a voice has when it is raised in the open air, and in the midst of a great concourse of persons—was heard, and a man stepped with a shout of laughter from the rank, and smote Barnaby on the shoulders with his heavy hand.

"How now?" he cried. "Barnaby Rudge! Why, where have you been hiding for these hundred years?"

Barnaby had been thinking within himself that the smell of the trodden grass brought back his old days at cricket, when he was a young boy and played on Chigwell Green. Confused by this sudden and boisterous address, he stared in a bewildered manner at the man, and could scarcely say, "What! Hugh!"

"Hugh!" echoed the other; "ay, Hugh—Maypole Hugh! You remember my dog? He's alive now, and will know you, I warrant. What! you wear the colour, do you? Well done! Ha, ha, ha!"

"You know this young man, I see," said Lord George.

"Know him, my lord! as well as I know my own right hand. My captain knows him. We all know him."

"Will you take him into your division?"

"It hasn't in it a better, nor a nimbler, nor a more active man, than Barnaby Rudge," said Hugh. "Show me the man who says it has! Fall in, Barnaby. He shall march, my lord, between me and Dennis; and he shall carry," he added, taking a flag from the hand of a tired man who tendered it, "the gayest silken streamer in this valiant army."

"In the name of God, no!" shrieked the



widow, darting forward. "Barnaby—my lord—see—he'll come back—Barnaby—Barnaby!"

"Women in the field!" cried Hugh, stepping between them, and holding her off. "Holloa! My captain there!"

"What's the matter here?" cried Simon Tappetit, bustling up in a great heat. "Do you call this order?"

"Nothing like it, captain," answered Hugh, still holding her back with his outstretched hand. "It's against all orders. Ladies are carrying off our gallant soldiers from their duty. The word of command, captain! They're filing off the ground. Quick!"

"Close!" cried Simon with the whole power of his lungs. "Form! March!"

She was thrown to the ground; the whole field was in motion; Barnaby was whirled away into the heart of a dense mass of men, and she saw him no more.

CHAPTER XLIX.

**T**HE mob had been divided, from its first assemblage, into four divisions; the London, the Westminster, the Southwark, and the Scotch. Each of these divisions being subdivided into various bodies, and these bodies being drawn up in various forms and figures, the general arrangement was, except to the few chiefs and leaders, as unintelligible as the plan of a great battle to the meanest soldier in the field. It was not without its method, however; for, in a very short space of time after being put in motion, the crowd had resolved itself into three great parties, and were prepared, as had been arranged, to cross the river by different bridges, and make for the House of Commons in separate detachments.

At the head of that division which had Westminster Bridge for its approach to the scene of action, Lord George Gordon took his post; with Gashford at his right hand, and sundry ruffians, of most unpromising appearance, forming a kind of staff about him. The conduct of a second party, whose route lay by Blackfriars, was intrusted to a committee of management, including perhaps a dozen men; while the third, which was to go by London Bridge, and through the main streets, in order that their numbers and their serious intentions might be better known and appreciated by the citizens, were led by Simon Tappetit (assisted by a few subalterns, selected from the Brotherhood of United Bull-

dogs), Dennis the hangman, Hugh, and some others.

The word of command being given, each of these great bodies took the road assigned to it, and departed on its way, in perfect order and profound silence. That which went through the City greatly exceeded the others in number, and was of such prodigious extent that when the rear began to move, the front was nearly four miles in advance, notwithstanding that the men marched three abreast, and followed very close upon each other.

At the head of this party, in the place where Hugh, in the madness of his humour, had stationed him, and walking between that dangerous companion and the hangman, went Barnaby; as many a man among the thousands who looked on that day afterwards remembered well. Forgetful of all other things in the ecstasy of the moment, his face flushed, and his eyes sparkling with delight, heedless of the weight of the great banner he carried, and mindful only of its flashing in the sun and rustling in the summer breeze, on he went, proud, happy, elated past all telling: the only light-hearted, undesigning creature in the whole assembly.

"What do you think of this?" asked Hugh, as they passed through the crowded streets, and looked up at the windows which were thronged with spectators. "They have all turned out to see our flags and streamers. Eh, Barnaby? Why, Barnaby's the greatest man of all the pack! His flag's the largest of the lot, the brightest too. There's nothing in the show like Barnaby. All eyes are turned on him. Ha, ha, ha!"

"Don't make that din, brother," growled the hangman, glancing with no very approving eyes at Barnaby as he spoke. "I hope he don't think there's nothing to be done but carrying that there piece of blue rag, like a boy at a breaking-up. You're ready for action I hope, eh? You, I mean," he added, nudging Barnaby roughly with his elbow. "What are you staring at? Why don't you speak?"

Barnaby had been gazing at his flag, and looked vacantly from his questioner to Hugh.

"He don't understand your way," said the latter. "Here, I'll explain it to him. Barnaby, old boy, attend to me."

"I'll attend," said Barnaby, looking anxiously round; "but I wish I could see her somewhere."

"See who?" demanded Dennis in a gruff tone. "You an't in love I hope, brother? That an't the sort of thing for us, you know. We mustn't have no love here."

"She would be proud indeed to see me now,

eh, Hugh?" said Barnaby. "Wouldn't it make her glad to see me at the head of this large show? She'd cry with joy, I know she would. Where *can* she be? She never sees me at my best, and what do I care to be gay and fine if *she's* not by?"

"Why, what palaver's this?" asked Mr. Dennis with supreme disdain. "We an't got no sentimental members among us, I hope."

"Don't be uneasy, brother," cried Hugh; "he's only talking of his mother."

"Of his what?" said Mr. Dennis with a strong oath.

"His mother."

"And have I combined myself with this here section, and turned out on this here memorable day, to hear men talk about their mothers?" growled Mr. Dennis with extreme disgust.



"IN THE NAME OF GOD, NO!" SHRIEKED THE WIDOW, DARTING FORWARD. "BARNABY—MY LORD—SEE—HE'LL COME BACK—BARNABY, BARNABY!"

"The notion of a man's sweetheart's bad enough, but a man's mother!" And here his disgust was so extreme that he spat upon the ground, and could say no more.

"Barnaby's right," cried Hugh with a grin, "and I say it. Lookee, bold lad. If she's not here to see, it's because I've provided for her, and sent half-a-dozen gentlemen, every one of 'em with a blue flag (but not half as fine as yours), to take her, in state, to a grand house all hung round with gold and silver banners, and

everything else you please, where she'll wait till you come, and want for nothing."

"Ay!" said Barnaby, his face beaming with delight: "have you indeed? That's a good hearing. That's fine! Kind Hugh!"

"But nothing to what will come, bless you!" retorted Hugh, with a wink at Dennis, who regarded his new companion in arms with great astonishment.

"No, indeed?" cried Barnaby.

"Nothing at all," said Hugh. "Money,



cocked-hats and feathers, red coats and gold lace; all the fine things there are, ever were, or will be; will belong to us if we are true to that noble gentleman—the best man in the world—carry our flags for a few days, and keep 'em safe. That's all we've got to do."

"Is that all?" cried Barnaby with glistening eyes, as he clutched his pole the tighter; "I warrant you I keep this one safe, then. You have put it in good hands. You know me, Hugh. Nobody shall wrest this flag away."

"Well said!" cried Hugh. "Ha, ha! Nobly said! That's the old stout Barnaby, that I have climbed and leaped with many and many a day—I knew I was not mistaken in Barnaby.—Don't you see, man," he added in a whisper, as he slipped to the other side of Dennis, "that the lad's a natural, and can be got to do anything if you take him the right way? Letting alone the fun he is, he's worth a dozen men in earnest, as you'd find if you tried a fall with him. Leave him to me. You shall soon see whether he's of use or not."

Mr. Dennis received these explanatory remarks with many nods and winks, and softened his behaviour towards Barnaby from that moment. Hugh, laying his finger on his nose, stepped back into his former place, and they proceeded in silence.

It was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon when the three great parties met at Westminster, and uniting into one huge mass, raised a tremendous shout. This was not only done in token of their presence, but as a signal to those on whom the task devolved, that it was time to take possession of the lobbies of both Houses, and of the various avenues of approach, and of the gallery stairs. To the last-named place, Hugh and Dennis, still with their pupil between them, rushed straightway; Barnaby having given his flag into the hands of one of their own party, who kept them at the outer door. Their followers pressing on behind, they were borne as on a great wave to the very doors of the gallery, whence it was impossible to retreat, even if they had been so inclined, by reason of the throng which choked up the passages. It is a familiar expression, in describing a great crowd, that a person might have walked upon the people's heads. In this case it was actually done; for a boy who had by some means got among the concourse, and was in imminent danger of suffocation, climbed to the shoulders of a man beside him, and walked upon the people's hats and heads into the open street; traversing in his passage the whole length of two staircases and a long gallery. Nor was

the swarm without less dense; for a basket which had been tossed into the crowd was jerked from head to head, and shoulder to shoulder, and went spinning and whirling on above them, until it was lost to view, without ever once falling in among them or coming near the ground.

Through this vast throng, sprinkled doubtless here and there with honest zealots, but composed for the most part of the very scum and refuse of London, whose growth was fostered by bad criminal laws, bad prison regulations, and the worst conceivable police, such of the members of both Houses of Parliament as had not taken the precaution to be already at their posts were compelled to fight and force their way. Their carriages were stopped and broken; the wheels wrenched off; the glasses shattered to atoms; the panels beaten in; drivers, footmen, and masters pulled from their seats and rolled in the mud. Lords, commoners, and reverend bishops, with little distinction of person or party, were kicked and pinched and hustled; passed from hand to hand through various stages of ill-usage; and sent to their fellow-senators at last with their clothes hanging in ribbons about them, their bag-wigs torn off, themselves speechless and breathless, and their persons covered with the powder which had been cuffed and beaten out of their hair. One lord was so long in the hands of the populace, that the Peers as a body resolved to sally forth and rescue him, and were in the act of doing so, when he happily appeared among them covered with dirt and bruises, and hardly to be recognised by those who knew him best. The noise and uproar were on the increase every moment. The air was filled with execrations, hoots, and howlings. The mob raged and roared, like a mad monster as it was, unceasingly, and each new outrage served to swell its fury.

Within doors, matters were even yet more threatening. Lord George—preceded by a man who carried the immense petition on a porter's knot through the lobby to the door of the House of Commons, where it was received by two officers of the House, who rolled it up to the table ready for presentation—had taken his seat at an early hour, before the Speaker went to prayers. His followers pouring in at the same time, the lobby and all the avenues were immediately filled, as we have seen. Thus the members were not only attacked in their passage through the streets, but were set upon within the very walls of Parliament; while the tumult, both within and without, was so great, that those who attempted to speak could scarcely hear their own voices: far less consult upon the

course it would be wise to take in such extremity, or animate each other to dignified and firm resistance. So sure as any member, just arrived, with dress disordered and dishevelled hair, came struggling through the crowd in the lobby, it yelled and screamed in triumph; and when the door of the House, partially and cautiously opened by those within for his admission, gave them a momentary glimpse of the interior, they grew more wild and savage, like beasts at the sight of prey, and made a rush against the portal, which strained its locks and bolts in their staples, and shook the very beams.

The strangers' gallery, which was immediately above the door of the House, had been ordered to be closed on the first rumour of disturbance, and was empty; save that now and then Lord George took his seat there, for the convenience of coming to the head of the stairs which led to it, and repeating to the people what had passed within. It was on these stairs that Barnaby, Hugh, and Dennis were posted. There were two flights, short, steep, and narrow, running parallel to each other, and leading to two little doors communicating with a low passage which opened on the gallery. Between them was a kind of well, or unglazed sky-light, for the admission of light and air into the lobby, which might be some eighteen or twenty feet below.

Upon one of these little staircases—not that at the head of which Lord George appeared from time to time, but the other—Gashford stood with his elbow on the banister, and his cheek resting on his hand, with his usual crafty aspect. Whenever he varied this attitude in the slightest degree—so much as by the gentlest motion of his arm—the uproar was certain to increase, not merely there, but in the lobby below; from which place, no doubt, some man who acted as fogleman to the rest was constantly looking up and watching him.

“Order!” cried Hugh in a voice which made itself heard even above the roar and tumult, as Lord George appeared at the top of the staircase. “News! News from my lord!”

The noise continued, notwithstanding his appearance, until Gashford looked round. There was silence immediately—even among the people in the passages without, and on the other staircases, who could neither see nor hear, but to whom, notwithstanding, the signal was conveyed with marvellous rapidity.

“Gentlemen,” said Lord George, who was very pale and agitated, “we must be firm. They talk of delays, but we must have no delays. They talk of taking your petition into consideration next Tuesday, but we must have it con-

sidered now. Present appearances look bad for our success, but we must succeed, and will!”

“We must succeed, and will!” echoed the crowd. And so, among their shouts and cheers and other cries, he bowed to them and retired, and presently came back again. There was another gesture from Gashford, and a dead silence directly.

“I am afraid,” he said this time, “that we have little reason, gentlemen, to hope for any redress from the proceedings of Parliament. But we must redress our own grievances, we must meet again, we must put our trust in Providence, and it will bless our endeavours.”

This speech, being a little more temperate than the last, was not so favourably received. When the noise and exasperation were at their height, he came back once more, and told them that the alarm had gone forth for many miles round; that when the King heard of their assembling together in that great body, he had no doubt his Majesty would send down private orders to have their wishes complied with; and—with the manner of his speech as childish, irresolute, and uncertain as his matter—was proceeding in this strain, when two gentlemen suddenly appeared at the door where he stood, and pressing past him, and coming a step or two lower down upon the stairs, confronted the people.

The boldness of this action quite took them by surprise. They were not the less disconcerted when one of the gentlemen, turning to Lord George, spoke thus—in a loud voice that they might hear him well, but quite coolly and collectedly:

“You may tell these people, if you please, my lord, that I am General Conway, of whom they have heard; and that I oppose this petition, and all their proceedings, and yours. I am a soldier, you may tell them, and I will protect the freedom of this place with my sword. You see, my lord, that the members of this House are all in arms to-day; you know that the entrance to it is a narrow one; you cannot be ignorant that there are men within these walls who are determined to defend that pass to the last, and before whom many lives must fall if your adherents persevere. Have a care what you do.”

“And, my Lord George,” said the other gentleman, addressing him in like manner, “I desire them to hear this from me—Colonel Gordon—your near relation. If a man among this crowd, whose uproar strikes us deaf, crosses the threshold of the House of Commons, I



swear to run my sword that moment—not into his, but into your body!”

With that, they stepped back again, keeping their faces towards the crowd; took each an arm of the misguided nobleman; drew him into the passage, and shut the door; which they directly locked and fastened on the inside.

This was so quickly done, and the demeanour of both gentlemen—who were not young men either—was so gallant and resolute, that the crowd faltered, and stared at each other with irresolute and timid looks. Many tried to turn towards the door; some of the faintest-hearted cried that they had best go back, and called to those behind to give way; and the panic and confusion were increasing rapidly, when Gashford whispered Hugh.

“What now?” Hugh roared aloud, turning towards them. “Why go back? Where can you do better than here, boys? One good rush against these doors, and one below at the same time, will do the business. Rush on, then! As to the door below, let those stand back who are afraid. Let those who are not afraid try who shall be the first to pass it. Here goes! Look out down there!”

Without the delay of an instant, he threw himself headlong over the banisters into the lobby below. He had hardly touched the ground when Barnaby was at his side. The chaplain’s assistant, and some members who were imploring the people to retire, immediately withdrew; and then, with a great shout, both crowds threw themselves against the doors pell-mell, and besieged the House in earnest.

At that moment, when a second onset must have brought them into collision with those who stood on the defensive within, in which case great loss of life and bloodshed would inevitably have ensued,—the hindmost portion of the crowd gave way, and the rumour spread from mouth to mouth that a messenger had been dispatched by water for the military, who were forming in the street. Fearful of sustaining a charge in the narrow passages in which they were so closely wedged together, the throng poured out as impetuously as they had flocked in. As the whole stream turned at once, Barnaby and Hugh went with it: and so, fighting and struggling, and trampling on fallen men, and being trampled on in turn themselves, they and the whole mass floated by degrees into the open street, where a large detachment of the Guards, both horse and foot, came hurrying up; clearing the ground before them so rapidly that the people seemed to melt away as they advanced.

The word of command to halt being given,

the soldiers formed across the street; the rioters, breathless and exhausted with their late exertions, formed likewise, though in a very irregular and disorderly manner. The commanding officer rode hastily into the open space between the two bodies, accompanied by a magistrate and an officer of the House of Commons, for whose accommodation a couple of troopers had hastily dismounted. The Riot Act was read, but not a man stirred.

In the first rank of the insurgents, Barnaby and Hugh stood side by side. Somebody had thrust into Barnaby’s hands, when he came out into the street, his precious flag; which, being now rolled up and tied round the pole, looked like a giant quarter-staff as he grasped it firmly and stood upon his guard. If ever man believed with his whole heart and soul that he was engaged in a just cause, and that he was bound to stand by his leader to the last, poor Barnaby believed it of himself and Lord George Gordon.

After an ineffectual attempt to make himself heard, the magistrate gave the word, and the Horse Guards came riding in among the crowd. But, even then, he galloped here and there, exhorting the people to disperse; and, although heavy stones were thrown at the men, and some were desperately cut and bruised, they had no orders but to make prisoners of such of the rioters as were the most active, and to drive the people back with the flat of their sabres. As the horses came in among them, the throng gave way at many points, and the Guards, following up their advantage, were rapidly clearing the ground, when two or three of the foremost, who were in a manner cut off from the rest by the people closing round them, made straight towards Barnaby and Hugh, who had no doubt been pointed out as the two men who dropped into the lobby: laying about them now with some effect, and inflicting on the more turbulent of their opponents a few slight flesh wounds, under the influence of which a man dropped, here and there, into the arms of his fellows, amid much groaning and confusion.

At the sight of gashed and bloody faces, seen for a moment in the crowd, then hidden by the press around them, Barnaby turned pale and sick. But he stood his ground, and grasping his pole more firmly yet, kept his eye fixed upon the nearest soldier—nodding his head meanwhile, as Hugh, with a scowling visage, whispered in his ear.

The soldier came spurring on, making his horse rear as the people pressed about him, cutting at the hands of those who would have grasped his rein and forced his charger back,

and waving to his comrades to follow—and still Barnaby, without retreating an inch, waited for his coming. Some called to him to fly, and some were in the very act of closing round him to prevent his being taken, when the pole swept

the air above the people's heads, and the man's saddle was empty in an instant.

Then, he and Hugh turned and fled; the crowd opening to let them pass, and closing up again so quickly that there was no clue to the



“THE POLE SWEEPED THE AIR ABOVE THE PEOPLE’S HEADS, AND THE MAN’S SADDLE WAS EMPTY IN AN INSTANT.”

course they had taken. Panting for breath, hot, dusty, and exhausted with fatigue, they reached the river-side in safety, and getting into a boat with all dispatch, were soon out of any immediate danger.

As they glided down the river, they plainly

heard the people cheering; and supposing they might have forced the soldiers to retreat, lay upon their oars for a few minutes, uncertain whether to return or not. But the crowd passing along Westminster Bridge soon assured them that the populace were dispersing; and



Hugh rightly guessed, from this, that they had cheered the magistrate for offering to dismiss the military on condition of their immediate departure to their several homes, and that he and Barnaby were better where they were. He advised, therefore, that they should proceed to Blackfriars, and, going ashore at the bridge, make the best of their way to The Boot; where there was not only good entertainment and safe lodging, but where they would certainly be joined by many of their late companions. Barnaby assenting, they decided on this course of action, and pulled for Blackfriars accordingly.

They landed at a critical time, and, fortunately for themselves, at the right moment. For, coming into Fleet Street, they found it in an unusual stir; and, inquiring the cause, were told that a body of Horse Guards had just galloped past, and that they were escorting some rioters whom they had made prisoners to Newgate for safety. Not at all ill pleased to have so narrowly escaped the cavalcade, they lost no more time in asking questions, but hurried to The Boot with as much speed as Hugh considered it prudent to make, without appearing singular or attracting an inconvenient share of public notice.

## CHAPTER L.



THEY were among the first to reach the tavern, but they had not been there many minutes, when several groups of men who had formed part of the crowd came straggling in. Among them were Simon Tappertit and Mr. Dennis; both of whom, but especially the latter, greeted Barnaby with the utmost warmth, and paid him many compliments on the prowess he had shown.

"Which," said Dennis with an oath, as he rested his bludgeon in a corner with his hat upon it, and took his seat at the same table with them, "it does me good to think of. There was a opportunity! But it led to nothing. For my part, I don't know what would. There's no spirit among the people in these here times. Bring something to eat and drink here. I'm disgusted with humanity."

"On what account?" asked Mr. Tappertit, who had been quenching his fiery face in a half-gallon can. "Don't you consider this a good beginning, mister?"

"Give me security that it an't a ending," rejoined the hangman. "When that soldier

went down, we might have made London ours; but no;—we stand, and gape, and look on—the justice (I wish he had had a bullet in each eye, as he would have had, if we'd gone to work my way) says, 'My lads, if you'll give me your word to disperse, I'll order off the military,'—our people sets up a hurrah, throws up the game with the winning cards in their hands, and skulks away like a pack of tame curs as they are. Ah," said the hangman in a tone of deep disgust, "it makes me blush for my feller-creeturs. I wish I had been born a ox, I do!"

"You'd have been quite as agreeable a character if you had been, I think," returned Simon Tappertit, going out in a lofty manner.

"Don't be too sure of that," rejoined the hangman, calling after him; "if I was a horned animal at the present moment, with the smallest grain of sense, I'd toss every man in this company, excepting them two," meaning Hugh and Barnaby, "for his manner of conducting himself this day."

With which mournful review of their proceedings, Mr. Dennis sought consolation in cold boiled beef and beer; but without at all relaxing the grim and dissatisfied expression of his face, the gloom of which was rather deepened than dissipated by their grateful influence.

The company who were thus libelled might have retaliated by strong words, if not by blows, but they were dispirited and worn out. The greater part of them had fasted since morning; all had suffered extremely from the excessive heat; and between the day's shouting, exertion, and excitement, many had quite lost their voices, and so much of their strength that they could hardly stand. Then they were uncertain what to do next, fearful of the consequences of what they had done already, and sensible that after all they had carried no point, but had, indeed, left matters worse than they had found them. Of those who had come to The Boot, many dropped off within an hour; such of them as were really honest and sincere, never, after the morning's experience, to return, or to hold any communication with their late companions. Others remained but to refresh themselves, and then went home desponding; others, who had theretofore been regular in their attendance, avoided the place altogether. The half-dozen prisoners whom the Guards had taken were magnified by report into half a hundred at least; and their friends, being faint and sober, so slackened in their energy, and so drooped beneath these dispiriting influences, that by eight o'clock in the evening Dennis, Hugh, and

Barnaby were left alone. Even they were fast asleep upon the benches when Gashford's entrance roused them.

"Oh! You *are* here then?" said the secretary. "Dear me!"

"Why, where should we be, Muster Gashford?" Dennis rejoined as he rose into a sitting posture.

"Oh, nowhere, nowhere," he returned with excessive mildness. "The streets are filled with blue cockades. I rather thought you might have been among them. I am glad you are not."

"You have orders for us, master, then?" said Hugh.

"Oh dear no. Not I. No orders, my good fellow. What orders should I have? You are not in my service."

"Muster Gashford," remonstrated Dennis, "we belong to the cause, don't we?"

"The cause!" repeated the secretary, looking at him in a sort of abstraction. "There is no cause. The cause is lost."

"Lost!"

"Oh yes! You have heard, I suppose? The petition is rejected by a hundred and ninety-two to six. It's quite final. We might have spared ourselves some trouble. That, and my lord's vexation, are the only circumstances I regret. I am quite satisfied in all other respects."

As he said this, he took a penknife from his pocket, and putting his hat upon his knee, began to busy himself in ripping off the blue cockade which he had worn all day; at the same time humming a psalm tune which had been very popular in the morning, and dwelling on it with a gentle regret.

His two adherents looked at each other, and at him, as if they were at a loss how to pursue the subject. At length Hugh, after some elbowing and winking between himself and Mr. Dennis, ventured to stay his hand, and to ask him why he meddled with that ribbon in his hat.

"Because," said the secretary, looking up with something between a snarl and a smile, "because to sit still and wear it, or fall asleep and wear it, or run away and wear it, is a mockery. That's all, friend."

"What would you have us do, master?" cried Hugh.

"Nothing," returned Gashford, shrugging his shoulders; "nothing. When my lord was reproached and threatened for standing by you, I, as a prudent man, would have had you do nothing. When the soldiers were trampling you under their horses' feet, I would have had you

do nothing. When one of them was struck down by a daring hand, and I saw confusion and dismay in all their faces, I would have had you do nothing—just what you did, in short. This is the young man who had so little prudence and so much boldness. Ah! I am sorry for him."

"Sorry, master!" cried Hugh.

"Sorry, Muster Gashford!" echoed Dennis.

"In case there should be a proclamation out to-morrow, offering five hundred pounds, or some such trifle, for his apprehension; and in case it should include another man who dropped into the lobby from the stairs above," said Gashford coldly; "still, do nothing."

"Fire and fury, master!" cried Hugh, starting up. "What have we done, that you should talk to us like this?"

"Nothing," returned Gashford with a sneer. "If you are cast into prison; if the young man"—here he looked hard at Barnaby's attentive face—"is dragged from us and from his friends; perhaps from people whom he loves, and whom his death would kill; is thrown into gaol, brought out, and hanged before their eyes; still, do nothing. You'll find it your best policy, I have no doubt."

"Come on!" cried Hugh, striding towards the door. "Dennis—Barnaby—come on!"

"Where? To do what?" said Gashford, slipping past him, and standing with his back against it.

"Anywhere! Anything!" cried Hugh. "Stand aside, master, or the window will serve our turn as well. Let us out!"

"Ha, ha, ha! You are of such—of such an impetuous nature," said Gashford, changing his manner for one of the utmost good-fellowship and the pleasantest raillery; "you are such an excitable creature—but you'll drink with me before you go?"

"Oh yes—certainly," growled Dennis, drawing his sleeve across his thirsty lips. "No malice, brother. Drink with Muster Gashford!"

Hugh wiped his heated brow, and relaxed into a smile. The artful secretary laughed outright.

"Some liquor here! Be quick, or he'll not stop, even for that. He is a man of such desperate ardour!" said the smooth secretary, whom Mr. Dennis corroborated with sundry nods and muttered oaths. "Once roused, he is a fellow of such fierce determination!"

Hugh poised his sturdy arm aloft, and clapping Barnaby on the back, bade him fear nothing. They shook hands together—poor Barnaby evi-



dently possessed with the idea that he was among the most virtuous and disinterested heroes in the world—and Gashford laughed again.

“I hear,” he said smoothly, as he stood among them with a great measure of liquor in his hand, and filled their glasses as quickly and as often as they chose, “I hear—but I cannot say whether it be true or false—that the men who are loitering in the streets to-night are half disposed to pull down a Romish chapel or two, and that they only want leaders. I even heard mention of those in Duke Street, Lincoln’s Inn Fields, and in Warwick Street, Golden Square; but common report, you know— You are not going?”

“—To do nothing, master, eh?” cried Hugh. “No gaols and halter for Barnaby and me. They must be frightened out of that. Leaders are wanted, are they? Now, boys!”

“A most impetuous fellow!” cried the secretary. “Ha, ha! A courageous, boisterous, most vehement fellow! A man who——”

There was no need to finish the sentence, for they had rushed out of the house, and were far beyond hearing. He stopped in the middle of a laugh, listened, drew on his gloves, and, clasping his hands behind him, paced the deserted room for a long time, then bent his steps towards the busy town, and walked into the streets.

They were filled with people, for the rumour of that day’s proceedings had made a great noise. Those persons who did not care to leave home were at their doors or windows, and one topic of discourse prevailed on every side. Some reported that the riots were effectually put down; others, that they had broken out again: some said that Lord George Gordon had been sent under a strong guard to the Tower; others, that an attempt had been made upon the king’s life, that the soldiers had been again called out, and that the noise of musketry in a distant part of the town had been plainly heard within an hour. As it grew darker, these stories became more direful and mysterious; and often, when some frightened passenger ran past with tidings that the rioters were not far off, and were coming up, the doors were shut and barred, lower windows made secure, and as much consternation engendered as if the city were invaded by a foreign army.

Gashford walked stealthily about, listening to all he heard, and diffusing or confirming, whenever he had an opportunity, such false intelligence as suited his own purpose; and, busily occupied in this way, turned into Holborn for

the twentieth time, when a great many women and children came flying along the street—often panting and looking back—and the confused murmur of numerous voices struck upon his ear. Assured by these tokens, and by the red light which began to flash upon the houses on either side, that some of his friends were indeed approaching, he begged a moment’s shelter at a door which opened as he passed, and running with some other persons to an upper window, looked out upon the crowd.

They had torches among them, and the chief faces were distinctly visible. That they had been engaged in the destruction of some building was sufficiently apparent, and that it was a Catholic place of worship was evident from the spoils they bore as trophies, which were easily recognisable for the vestments of priests and rich fragments of altar furniture. Covered with soot, and dirt, and dust, and lime; their garments torn to rags; their hair hanging wildly about them; their hands and faces jagged and bleeding with the wounds of rusty nails; Barnaby, Hugh, and Dennis hurried on before them all, like hideous madmen. After them, the dense throng came fighting on: some singing; some shouting in triumph; some quarrelling among themselves; some menacing the spectators as they passed; some with great wooden fragments, on which they spent their rage as if they had been alive, rending them limb from limb, and hurling the scattered morsels high into the air; some in a drunken state, unconscious of the hurts they had received from falling bricks, and stones, and beams; one borne upon a shutter, in the very midst, covered with a dingy cloth, a senseless, ghastly heap. Thus—a vision of coarse faces, with here and there a blot of flaring smoky light; a dream of demon heads and savage eyes, and sticks and iron bars uplifted in the air and whirled about; a bewildering horror, in which so much was seen, and yet so little, which seemed so long, and yet so short, in which there were so many phantoms, not to be forgotten all through life, and yet so many things that could not be observed in one distracting glimpse—it flitted onward, and was gone.

As it passed away upon its work of wrath and ruin, a piercing scream was heard. A knot of persons ran towards the spot; Gashford, who just then emerged into the street, among them. He was on the outskirts of the little concourse, and could not see or hear what passed within; but one who had a better place informed him that a widow woman had descried her son among the rioters.

"Is that all?" said the secretary, turning his face homewards. "Well! I think this looks a little more like business!"

CHAPTER LI.

**P**ROMISING as these outrages were to Gashford's view, and much like business as they looked, they extended that night no farther. The soldiers were again called out, again they took half-a-dozen prisoners, and again the crowd dispersed after a short and bloodless scuffle. Hot and drunken though they were, they had not yet broken all bounds and set all law and government at defiance. Something of their habitual deference to the authority erected by society for its own preservation yet remained among them, and had its majesty been vindicated in time, the secretary would have had to digest a bitter disappointment.

By midnight the streets were clear and quiet, and, save that there stood in two parts of the town a heap of nodding walls and pile of rubbish, where there had been at sunset a rich and handsome building, everything wore its usual aspect. Even the Catholic gentry and tradesmen, of whom there were many resident in different parts of the city and its suburbs, had no fear for their lives or property, and but little indignation for the wrong they had already sustained in the plunder and destruction of their temples of worship. An honest confidence in the government under whose protection they had lived for many years, and a well-founded reliance on the good feeling and right thinking of the great mass of the community, with whom, notwithstanding their religious differences, they were every day in habits of confidential, affectionate, and friendly intercourse, reassured them, even under the excesses that had been committed; and convinced them that they who were Protestants in anything but the name were no more to be considered as abettors of these disgraceful occurrences, than they themselves were chargeable with the uses of the block, the rack, the gibbet, and the stake in cruel Mary's reign.

The clock was on the stroke of one, when Gabriel Varden, with his lady and Miss Miggs, sat waiting in the little parlour. This fact; the toppling wicks of the dull, wasted candles; the silence that prevailed; and, above all, the night-caps of both maid and matron, were sufficient evidence that they had been prepared for bed

some time ago, and had some strong reason for sitting up so far beyond their usual hour.

If any other corroborative testimony had been required, it would have been abundantly furnished in the actions of Miss Miggs, who, having arrived at that restless state and sensitive condition of the nervous system which are the result of long watching, did, by a constant rubbing and tweaking of her nose, a perpetual change of position (arising from the sudden growth of imaginary knots and knobs in her chair), a frequent friction of her eyebrows, the incessant recurrence of a small cough, a small groan, a gasp, a sigh, a sniff, a spasmodic start, and by other demonstrations of that nature, so file down and rasp, as it were, the patience of the locksmith, that after looking at her in silence for some time, he at last broke out into this apostrophe:

"Miggs, my good girl, go to bed—do go to bed. You're really worse than the dripping of a hundred water-butts outside the window, or the scratching of as many mice behind the wainscot. I can't bear it. Do go to bed, Miggs. To oblige me—do."

"You haven't got nothing to untie, sir," returned Miss Miggs, "and therefore your requests does not surprise me. But missis has—and while you set up, mim," she added, turning to the locksmith's wife, "I couldn't, no, not if twenty times the quantity of cold water was aperiently running down my back at this moment, go to bed with a quiet spirit."

Having spoken these words, Miss Miggs made divers efforts to rub her shoulders in an impossible place, and shivered from head to foot; thereby giving the beholders to understand that the imaginary cascade was still in full flow, but that a sense of duty upheld her under that, and all other sufferings, and nerved her to endurance.

Mrs. Varden being too sleepy to speak, and Miss Miggs having, as the phrase is, said her say, the locksmith had nothing for it but to sigh and be as quiet as he could.

But to be quiet with such a basilisk before him was impossible. If he looked another way, it was worse to feel that she was rubbing her cheek, or twitching her ear, or winking her eye, or making all kinds of extraordinary shapes with her nose, than to see her do it. If she was for a moment free from any of these complaints, it was only because of her foot being asleep, or of her arm having got the fidgets, or of her leg being doubled up with the cramp, or of some other horrible disorder which racked her whole frame. If she did enjoy a moment's ease, then, with her eyes shut and her mouth wide open, she would be seen to sit very stiff and upright



in her chair; then to nod a little way forward, and stop with a jerk; then to nod a little farther forward, and stop with another jerk; then to recover herself; then to come forward again—lower—lower—lower—by very slow degrees, until, just as it seemed impossible that she could preserve her balance for another instant, and the locksmith was about to call out in an agony, to save her from dashing down upon her forehead and fracturing her skull, then all of a sudden,

and without the smallest notice, she would come upright and rigid again with her eyes open, and in her countenance an expression of defiance, sleepy, but yet most obstinate, which plainly said, "I've never once closed 'em since I looked at you last, and I'll take my oath of it!"

At length, after the clock had struck two, there was a sound at the street-door, as if somebody had fallen against the knocker by accident. Miss Miggs, immediately jumping up and clapping her



"IT FLITTED ONWARD, AND WAS GONE."

hands, cried, with a drowsy mingling of the sacred and profane, "Ally Loyer, mim! there's Simmuns's knock!"

"Who's there?" said Gabriel.

"Me!" cried the well-known voice of Mr. Tappertit. Gabriel opened the door, and gave him admission.

He did not cut a very insinuating figure; for a man of his stature suffers in a crowd; and having been active in yesterday morning's work, his dress was literally crushed from head to foot;

BARNABY RUDGE, 14.

his hat being beaten out of all shape, and his shoes trodden down at heel like slippers. His coat fluttered in strips about him, the buckles were torn away both from his knees and feet, half his neckerchief was gone, and the bosom of his shirt was rent to tatters. Yet, notwithstanding all these personal disadvantages; despite his being very weak from heat and fatigue; and so begrimed with mud and dust that he might have been in a case, for anything of the real texture (either of his skin or apparel) that

the eye could discern; he stalked haughtily into the parlour, and throwing himself into a chair, and endeavouring to thrust his hands into the pockets of his small-clothes, which were turned inside out, and displayed upon his legs like tassels, surveyed the household with a gloomy dignity.

"Simon," said the locksmith gravely, "how comes it that you return home at this time of night, and in this condition? Give me an assurance that you have not been among the rioters, and I am satisfied."

"Sir," replied Mr. Tappertit with a contemptuous look, "I wonder at *your* assurance in making such demands."

"You have been drinking," said the locksmith.

"As a general principle, and in the most offensive sense of the words, sir," returned his journeyman with great self-possession, "I consider you a liar. In that last observation you have unintentionally—unintentionally, sir—struck upon the truth."

"Martha," said the locksmith, turning to his wife and shaking his head sorrowfully, while a smile at the absurd figure before him still played upon his open face, "I trust it may turn out that this poor lad is not the victim of the knaves and fools we have so often had words about, and who have done so much harm to-day. If he has been at Warwick Street or Duke Street to-night—"

"He has been at neither, sir," cried Mr. Tappertit in a loud voice, which he suddenly dropped into a whisper as he repeated, with eyes fixed upon the locksmith, "he has been at neither."

"I am glad of it, with all my heart," said the locksmith in a serious tone; "for if he had been, and it could be proved against him, Martha, your Great Association would have been to him the cart that draws men to the gallows, and leaves them hanging in the air. It would, as sure as we're alive!"

Mrs. Varden was too much scared by Simon's altered manner and appearance, and by the accounts of the rioters which had reached her ears that night, to offer any retort, or to have recourse to her usual matrimonial policy. Miss Miggs wrung her hands, and wept.

"He was not at Duke Street or at Warwick Street, G. Varden," said Simon sternly: "but he *was* at Westminster. Perhaps, sir, he kicked a county member; perhaps, sir, he tapped a lord—you may stare, sir, I repeat it—blood flowed from noses, and perhaps he tapped a lord. Who knows? 'This,' he added, putting his hand into his waistcoat pocket, and taking out a large tooth, at the sight of which both Miggs and Mrs. Varden

screamed. "this was a bishop's. Beware, G. Varden!"

"Now, I would rather," said the locksmith hastily, "have paid five hundred pounds than had this come to pass. You idiot, do you know what peril you stand in?"

"I know it, sir," replied his journeyman, "and it is my glory. I was there, everybody saw me there. I was conspicuous and prominent. I will abide the consequences."

The locksmith, really disturbed and agitated, paced to and fro in silence—glancing at his former 'prentice every now and then—and at length, stopping before him, said:

"Get to bed, and sleep for a couple of hours. that you may wake penitent, and with some of your senses about you. Be sorry for what you have done, and we will try to save you. If I call him by five o'clock," said Varden, turning hurriedly to his wife, "and he washes himself clean and changes his dress, he may get to the Tower Stairs, and away by the Gravesend tide-boat, before any search is made for him. From there he can easily get on to Canterbury, where your cousin will give him work till this storm has blown over. I am not sure that I do right in screening him from the punishment he deserves, but he has lived in this house, man and boy, for a dozen years, and I should be sorry if for this one day's work he made a miserable end. Lock the front-door, Miggs, and show no light towards the street when you go up-stairs. Quick, Simon! Get to bed!"

"And do you suppose, sir," retorted Mr. Tappertit, with a thickness and slowness of speech which contrasted forcibly with the rapidity and earnestness of his kind-hearted master—"and do you suppose, sir, that I am base and mean enough to accept your servile proposition? Miscreant!"

"Whatever you please, Sim, but get to bed. Every minute is of consequence. The light here, Miggs!"

"Yes, yes, oh, do! Go to bed directly," cried the two women together.

Mr. Tappertit stood upon his feet, and pushing his chair away to show that he needed no assistance, answered, swaying himself to and fro, and managing his head as if it had no connection whatever with his body:

"You spoke of Miggs, sir—Miggs may be smothered!"

"Oh, Simmun!" ejaculated that young lady in a faint voice. "Oh, mim! Oh, sir! Oh, goodness gracious, what a turn he has give me!"

"This family may *all* be smothered, sir," re-



turned Mr. Tappertit, after glancing at her with a smile of ineffable disdain, "excepting Mrs. V. I have come here, sir, for her sake this night. Mrs. Varden, take this piece of paper. It's a protection, ma'am. You may need it."

With these words he held out at arm's length a dirty, crumpled scrap of writing. The locksmith took it from him, opened it, and read as follows:

"All good friends to our cause I hope will be particular, and do no injury to the property of any true Protestant. I am well assured that the proprietor of this house is a staunch and worthy friend to the cause.

"GEORGE GORDON."

"What's this?" said the locksmith with an altered face.

"Something that'll do you good service, young feller," replied his journeyman, "as you'll find. Keep that safe, and where you can lay your hand upon it in an instant. And chalk 'No Popery' on your door to-morrow night, and for a week to come—that's all."

"This is a genuine document," said the locksmith, "I know, for I have seen the hand before. What threat does it imply? What devil is abroad?"

"A fiery devil," retorted Sim; "a flaming furious devil. Don't you put yourself in its way, or you're done for, my buck. Be warned in time, G. Varden. Farewell!"

But here the two women threw themselves in his way—especially Miss Miggs, who fell upon him with such fervour that she pinned him against the wall—and conjured him in moving words not to go forth till he was sober; to listen to reason; to think of it; to take some rest, and then determine.

"I tell you," said Mr. Tappertit, "that my mind is made up. My bleeding country calls me, and I go! Miggs, if you don't get out of the way, I'll pinch you."

Miss Miggs, still clinging to the rebel, screamed once vociferously—but whether in the distraction of her mind, or because of his having executed his threat, is uncertain.

"Release me," said Simon, struggling to free himself from her chaste, but spider-like embrace. "Let me go! I have made arrangements for you in an altered state of society, and mean to provide for you comfortably in life—there! Will that satisfy you?"

"Oh, Simmun!" cried Miss Miggs. "Oh, my blessed Simmun! Oh, mim! what are my feelings at this conflicting moment!"

Of a rather turbulent description, it would seem; for her nightcap had been knocked off in the scuffle, and she was on her knees upon the floor, making a strange revelation of blue and yellow curl-papers, straggling locks of hair, tags of stay-laces, and strings of it's impossible to say what; panting for breath, clasping her hands, turning her eyes upwards, shedding abundance of tears, and exhibiting various other symptoms of the acutest mental suffering.

"I leave," said Simon, turning to his master, with an utter disregard of Miggs's maidenly affliction, "a box of things up-stairs. Do what you like with 'em. I don't want 'em. I'm never coming back here any more. Provide yourself, sir, with a journeyman; I'm my country's journeyman; henceforward that's *my* line of business."

"Be what you like in two hours' time, but now go up to bed," returned the locksmith, planting himself in the doorway. "Do you hear me? Go to bed!"

"I hear you, and defy you, Varden," rejoined Simon Tappertit. "This night, sir, I have been in the country, planning an expedition which shall fill your bell-hanging soul with wonder and dismay. The plot demands my utmost energy. Let me pass!"

"I'll knock you down if you come near the door," replied the locksmith. "You had better go to bed!"

Simon made no answer, but, gathering himself up as straight as he could, plunged head foremost at his old master, and the two went driving out into the workshop together, plying their hands and feet so briskly that they looked like half-a-dozen, while Miggs and Mrs. Varden screamed for twelve.

It would have been easy for Varden to knock his old 'prentice down, and bind him hand and foot; but, as he was loath to hurt him in his then defenceless state, he contented himself with parrying his blows when he could, taking them in perfect good part when he could not, and keeping between him and the door until a favourable opportunity should present itself for forcing him to retreat up-stairs, and shutting him up in his own room. But, in the goodness of his heart, he calculated too much upon his adversary's weakness, and forgot that drunken men, who have lost the power of walking steadily, can often run. Watching his time, Simon Tappertit made a cunning show of falling back, staggered unexpectedly forward, brushed past him, opened the door (he knew the trick of that lock well), and darted down the street like a mad dog. The locksmith paused for a moment in

the excess of his astonishment, and then gave chase.

It was an excellent season for a run, for at that silent hour the streets were deserted, the air was cool, and the flying figure before him distinctly visible at a great distance, as it sped away, with a long gaunt shadow following at its heels. But the short-winded locksmith had no chance against a man of Sim's youth and spare figure, though the day had been when he could have run him down in no time. The space between them rapidly increased, and as the rays

of the rising sun streamed upon Simon in the act of turning a distant corner, Gabriel Varden was fain to give up, and sit down on a door-step to fetch his breath. Simon meanwhile, without once stopping, fled at the same degree of swiftness to The Boot, where, as he well knew, some of his company were lying, and at which respectable hostelry—for he had already acquired the distinction of being in great peril of the law—a friendly watch had been expecting him all night, and was even now on the look-out for his coming.



"YOU HAVE BEEN DRINKING," SAID THE LOCKSMITH.

"Go thy ways, Sim, go thy ways," said the locksmith as soon as he could speak. "I have done my best for thee, poor lad, and would have saved thee, but the rope is round thy neck, I fear."

So saying, and shaking his head in a very sorrowful and disconsolate manner, he turned back, and soon re-entered his own house, where Mrs. Varden and the faithful Miggs had been anxiously expecting his return.

Now Mrs. Varden (and by consequence Miss Miggs likewise) was impressed with a secret misgiving that she had done wrong; that she

had, to the utmost of her small means, aided and abetted the growth of disturbances, the end of which it was impossible to foresee; that she had led remotely to the scene which had just passed; and that the locksmith's time for triumph and reproach had now arrived indeed. And so strongly did Mrs. Varden feel this, and so crest-fallen was she in consequence, that while her husband was pursuing their lost journeyman, she secreted under her chair the little red-brick dwelling-house with the yellow roof, lest it should furnish new occasion for reference to the painful theme; and now hid



the same still more with the skirts of her dress.

But it happened that the locksmith had been thinking of this very article on his way home, and that, coming into the room and not seeing it, he at once demanded where it was.

Mrs. Varden had no resource but to produce it, which she did with many tears, and broken protestations that if she could have known—

"Yes, yes," said Varden, "of course—I know that. I don't mean to reproach you, my dear. But recollect, from this time, that all good things perverted to evil purposes are worse than those which are naturally bad. A thoroughly wicked woman is wicked indeed. When religion goes wrong, she is very wrong, for the same reason. Let us say no more about it, my dear."

So he dropped the red-brick dwelling-house on the floor, and setting his heel upon it, crushed it into pieces. The halfpence, and sixpences, and other voluntary contributions rolled about in all directions, but nobody offered to touch them, or to take them up.

"That," said the locksmith, "is easily disposed of, and I would to Heaven that everything growing out of the same society could be settled as easily."

"It happens very fortunately, Varden," said his wife, with her handkerchief to her eyes, "that in case any more disturbances should happen—which I hope not; I sincerely hope not—"

"I hope so too, my dear."

"—That in case any should occur, we have the piece of paper which that poor misguided young man brought."

"Ay, to be sure," said the locksmith, turning quickly round. "Where is that piece of paper?"

Mrs. Varden stood aghast as he took it from her outstretched hand, tore it into fragments, and threw them under the grate.

"Not use it?" she said.

"Use it!" cried the locksmith. "No! Let them come and pull the roof about our ears; let them burn us out of house and home; I'd neither have the protection of their leader, nor chalk their howl upon my door, though, for not doing it, they shot me on my own threshold. Use it! Let them come and do their worst. The first man who crosses my door-step, on such an errand as theirs, had better be a hundred miles away. Let him look to it. The others may have their will. I wouldn't beg or buy them off, if, instead of every pound of iron in the place, there was a hundredweight of gold. Get

you to bed, Martha. I shall take down the shutters and go to work."

"So early?" said his wife.

"Ay," replied the locksmith cheerily, "so early. Come when they may, they shall not find us skulking and hiding, as if we feared to take our portion of the light of day, and left it all to them. So pleasant dreams to you, my dear, and cheerful sleep!"

With that he gave his wife a hearty kiss, and bade her delay no longer, or it would be time to rise before she lay down to rest. Mrs. Varden quite amiably and meekly walked up-stairs, followed by Miggs, who, although a good deal subdued, could not refrain from sundry stimulative coughs and sniffs by the way, or from holding up her hands in astonishment at the daring conduct of master.

## CHAPTER LII.



MOB is usually a creature of very mysterious existence, particularly in a large city. Where it comes from, or whither it goes, few men can tell. Assembling and dispersing with equal suddenness, it is as difficult to follow to its various sources as the sea itself; nor does the parallel stop here, for the ocean is not more fickle and uncertain, more terrible when roused, more unreasonable, or more cruel.

The people who were boisterous at Westminster upon the Friday morning, and were eagerly bent upon the work of devastation in Duke Street and Warwick Street at night, were, in the mass, the same. Allowing for the chance accessions of which any crowd is morally sure in a town where there must always be a large number of idle and profligate persons, one and the same mob was at both places. Yet they spread themselves in various directions when they dispersed in the afternoon, made no appointment for reassembling, had no definite purpose or design, and indeed, for anything they knew, were scattered beyond the hope of future union.

At The Boot, which, as has been shown, was in a manner the head-quarters of the rioters, there were not, upon this Friday night, a dozen people. Some slept in the stable and outhouses, some in the common room, some two or three in beds. The rest were in their usual homes or haunts. Perhaps not a score in all lay in the

adjacent fields and lanes, and under haystacks, or near the warmth of brick-kilns, who had not their accustomed place of rest beneath the open sky. As to the public ways within the town, they had their ordinary nightly occupants, and no others; the usual amount of vice and wretchedness, but no more.

The experience of one evening, however, had taught the reckless leaders of disturbance that they had but to show themselves in the streets, to be immediately surrounded by materials which they could only have kept together, when their aid was not required, at great risk, expense, and trouble. Once possessed of this secret, they were as confident as if twenty thousand men, devoted to their will, had been encamped about them, and assumed a confidence which could not have been surpassed, though that had really been the case. All day Saturday they remained quiet. On Sunday they rather studied how to keep their men within call, and in full hope, than to follow out, by any very fierce measure, their first day's proceedings.

"I hope," said Dennis, as, with a loud yawn, he raised his body from a heap of straw on which he had been sleeping, and, supporting his head upon his hand, appealed to Hugh on Sunday morning, "that Muster Gashford allows some rest? Perhaps he'd have us at work again already, eh?"

"It's not his way to let matters drop, you may be sure of that," growled Hugh in answer. "I'm in no humour to stir yet, though. I'm as stiff as a dead body, and as full of ugly scratches as if I had been fighting all day yesterday with wild cats."

"You've so much enthusiasm, that's it," said Dennis, looking with great admiration at the uncombed head, matted beard, and torn hands and face of the wild figure before him; "you're such a devil of a fellow. You hurt yourself a hundred times more than you need, because you will be foremost in everything, and will do more than the rest."

"For the matter of that," returned Hugh, shaking back his ragged hair and glancing towards the door of the stable in which they lay; "there's one yonder as good as me. What did I tell you about him? Did I say he was worth a dozen, when you doubted him?"

Mr. Dennis rolled lazily over upon his breast, and resting his chin upon his hand in imitation of the attitude in which Hugh lay, said, as he, too, looked towards the door:

"Ay, ay, you knew him, brother, you knew him. But who'd suppose, to look at that chap now, that he could be the man he is? Isn't it

a thousand cruel pities, brother, that instead of taking his nat'ral rest and qualifying himself for further exertions in this here honourable cause, he should be playing at soldiers like a boy? And his cleanliness too!" said Mr. Dennis, who certainly had no reason to entertain a fellow-feeling with anybody who was particular on that score; "what weaknesses he's guilty of, with respect to his cleanliness! At five o'clock this morning, there he was at the pump, though any one would think he had gone through enough, the day before yesterday, to be pretty fast asleep at that time. But no—when I woke for a minute or two, there he was at the pump, and if you'd have seen him sticking them peacock's feathers into his hat when he'd done washing—ah! I'm sorry he's such a imperfect character, but the best on us is incomplete in some pint of view or another."

The subject of this dialogue and of these concluding remarks, which were uttered in a tone of philosophical meditation, was, as the reader will have divined, no other than Barnaby, who, with his flag in his hand, stood sentry in the little patch of sun-light at the distant door, or walked to and fro outside, singing softly to himself, and keeping time to the music of some clear church bells. Whether he stood still, leaning with both hands on the flagstaff, or, bearing it upon his shoulder, paced slowly up and down, the careful arrangement of his poor dress, and his erect and lofty bearing, showed how high a sense he had of the great importance of his trust, and how happy and how proud it made him. To Hugh and his companion, who lay in a dark corner of the gloomy shed, he, and the sun-light, and the peaceful Sabbath sound to which he made response, seemed like a bright picture framed by the door, and set off by the stable's blackness. The whole formed such a contrast to themselves, as they lay wallowing, like some obscene animals, in their squalor and wickedness on the two heaps of straw, that for a few moments they looked on without speaking, and felt almost ashamed.

"Ah!" said Hugh at length, carrying it off with a laugh: "he's a rare fellow, is Barnaby, and can do more, with less rest, or meat, or drink, than any of us. As to his soldiering, I put him on duty there."

"Then there was a object in it, and a proper good one too, I'll be sworn," retorted Dennis with a broad grin, and an oath of the same quality. "What was it, brother?"

"Why, you see," said Hugh, crawling a little nearer to him, "that our noble captain yonder came in yesterday morning rather the worse for



liquor, and was—like you and me—ditto last night.”

Dennis looked to where Simon Tappetit lay coiled upon a truss of hay, snoring profoundly, and nodded.

“And our noble captain,” continued Hugh with another laugh, “our noble captain and I have planned for to-morrow a roaring expedition, with good profit in it.”

“Again the Papists?” asked Dennis, rubbing his hands.

“Ay, against the Papists—against one of ‘em, at least, that some of us, and I for one, owe a good heavy grudge to.”

“Not Muster Gashford’s friend that he spoke to us about in my house, eh?” said Dennis, brimful of pleasant expectation.

“The same man,” said Hugh.

“That’s your sort,” cried Mr. Dennis, gaily shaking hands with him, “that’s the kind of game. Let’s have revenges and injuries, and all that, and we shall get on twice as fast. Now you talk, indeed!”

“Ha, ha, ha! The captain,” added Hugh, “has thoughts of carrying off a woman in the bustle, and—ha, ha, ha!—and so have I!”

Mr. Dennis received this part of the scheme with a wry face, observing that as a general principle he objected to women altogether, as being unsafe and slippery persons, on whom there was no calculating with any certainty, and who were never in the same mind for four-and-twenty hours at a stretch. He might have expatiated on this suggestive theme at much greater length, but that it occurred to him to ask what connection existed between the proposed expedition and Barnaby’s being posted at the stable door as sentry; to which Hugh cautiously replied in these words:

“Why, the people we mean to visit were friends of his once upon a time, and I know that much of him to feel pretty sure that if he thought we were going to do them any harm, he’d be no friend to our side, but would lend a ready hand to the other. So I’ve persuaded him (for I know him of old) that Lord George has picked him out to guard this place to-morrow while we’re away, and that it’s a great honour—and so he’s on duty now, and as proud of it as if he was a general. Ha, ha! What do you say to me for a careful man as well as a devil of a one?”

Mr. Dennis exhausted himself in compliments, and then added,

“But about the expedition itself——”

“About that,” said Hugh, “you shall hear all particulars from me and the great captain con-

jointly and both together—for see, he’s waking up. Rouse yourself, lion-heart. Ha, ha! Put a good face upon it, and drink again. Another hair of the dog that bit you, captain! Call for drink! There’s enough of gold and silver cups and candlesticks buried underneath my bed,” he added, rolling back the straw, and pointing to where the ground was newly turned, “to pay for it, if it was a score of casks full. Drink, captain!”

Mr. Tappetit received these jovial promptings with a very bad grace, being much the worse, both in mind and body, for his two nights of debauch, and but indifferently able to stand upon his legs. With Hugh’s assistance, however, he contrived to stagger to the pump; and having refreshed himself with an abundant draught of cold water, and a copious shower of the same refreshing liquid on his head and face, he ordered some rum-and-milk to be served; and upon that innocent beverage, and some biscuits and cheese, made a pretty hearty meal. That done, he disposed himself in an easy attitude on the ground beside his two companions (who were carousing after their own tastes), and proceeded to enlighten Mr. Dennis in reference to to-morrow’s project.

That their conversation was an interesting one was rendered manifest by its length, and by the close attention of all three. That it was not of an oppressively grave character, but was enlivened by various pleasantries arising out of the subject, was clear from their loud and frequent roars of laughter, which startled Barnaby on his post, and made him wonder at their levity. But he was not summoned to join them until they had eaten, and drunk, and slept, and talked together for some hours; not, indeed, until the twilight; when they informed him that they were about to make a slight demonstration in the streets—just to keep the people’s hands in, as it was Sunday night, and the public might otherwise be disappointed—and that he was free to accompany them if he would.

Without the slightest preparation, saving that they carried clubs and wore the blue cockade, they sallied out into the streets; and, with no more settled design than that of doing as much mischief as they could, paraded them at random. Their numbers rapidly increasing, they soon divided into parties; and agreeing to meet by-and-by in the fields near Welbeck Street, scoured the town in various directions. The largest body, and that which augmented with the greatest rapidity, was the one to which Hugh and Barnaby belonged. This took its way towards Moorfields, where there was a rich

chapel, and in which neighbourhood several Catholic families were known to reside.

Beginning with the private houses so occupied, they broke open the doors and windows; and while they destroyed the furniture and left but the bare walls, made a sharp search for tools and engines of destruction, such as hammers, pokers, axes, saws, and such-like instruments. Many of the rioters made belts of cord, of handkerchiefs, or any material they found at hand, and wore these weapons as openly as pioneers upon a field-day. There was not the least disguise or concealment—indeed, on this night, very little excitement or hurry. From the chapels, they tore down and took away the very altars, benches, pulpits, pews, and flooring; from the dwelling-houses, the very wainscoting and stairs. This Sunday evening's recreation they pursued like mere workmen who had a certain task to do, and did it. Fifty resolute men might have turned them at any moment; a single company of soldiers could have scattered them like dust; but no man interposed, no authority restrained them, and, except by the terrified persons who fled from their approach, they were as little heeded as if they were pursuing their lawful occupations with the utmost sobriety and good conduct.

In the same manner, they marched to the place of rendezvous agreed upon, made great fires in the fields, and, reserving the most valuable of their spoils, burnt the rest. Priestly garments, images of saints, rich stuffs and ornaments, altar furniture and household goods, were cast into the flames, and shed a glare on the whole country round; but they danced, and howled, and roared about these fires till they were tired, and were never for an instant checked.

As the main body filed off from this scene of action, and passed down Welbeck Street, they came upon Gashford, who had been a witness of their proceedings, and was walking stealthily along the pavement. Keeping up with him, and yet not seeming to speak, Hugh muttered in his ear:

“Is this better, master?”

“No,” said Gashford. “It is not.”

“What would you have?” said Hugh. “Fevers are never at their height at once. They must get on by degrees.”

“I would have you,” said Gashford, pinching his arm with such malevolence that his nails seemed to meet in the skin: “I would have you put some meaning into your work. Fools! Can you make no better bonfires than of rags and scraps? Can you burn nothing whole?”

“A little patience, master,” said Hugh. “Wait

but a few hours, and you shall see. Look for a redness in the sky to-morrow night.”

With that, he fell back into his place beside Barnaby; and, when the secretary looked after him, both were lost in the crowd.

## CHAPTER LIII.

THE next day was ushered in by merry peals of bells, and by the firing of the Tower guns; flags were hoisted on many of the church steeples; the usual demonstrations were made in honour of the anniversary of the King's birthday; and every man went about his pleasure or business as if the city were in perfect order, and there were no half-smouldering embers in its secret places which, on the approach of night, would kindle up again, and scatter ruin and dismay abroad. The leaders of the riot, rendered still more daring by the success of last night and by the booty they had acquired, kept steadily together, and only thought of implicating the mass of their followers so deeply that no hope of pardon or reward might tempt them to betray their more notorious confederates into the hands of justice.

Indeed, the sense of having gone too far to be forgiven held the timid together no less than the bold. Many who would readily have pointed out the foremost rioters, and given evidence against them, felt that escape by that means was hopeless, when their every act had been observed by scores of people who had taken no part in the disturbances; who had suffered in their persons, peace, or property, by the outrages of the mob; who would be most willing witnesses; and whom the government would, no doubt, prefer to any King's evidence that might be offered. Many of this class had deserted their usual occupations on the Saturday morning; some had been seen by their employers active in the tumult; others knew they must be suspected, and that they would be discharged if they returned; others had been desperate from the beginning, and comforted themselves with the homely proverb, that, being hanged at all, they might as well be 'hanged for a sheep as a lamb. They all hoped and believed, in a greater or less degree, that the government they seemed to have paralysed would, in its terror, come to terms with them in the end, and suffer them to make their own conditions. The least sanguine among them reasoned with himself that, at the worst, they were too many to be all punished,



and that he had as good a chance of escape as any other man. The great mass never reasoned or thought at all, but were stimulated by their own headlong passions, by poverty, by ignorance, by the love of mischief, and the hope of plunder.

One other circumstance is worthy of remark ; and that is, that from the moment of their first outbreak at Westminster, every symptom of order or preconcerted arrangement among them vanished. When they divided into parties, and ran to different quarters of the town, it was on the spontaneous suggestion of the moment. Each party swelled as it went along, like rivers as they roll towards the sea ; new leaders sprang up as they were wanted, disappeared when the necessity was over, and reappeared at the next crisis. Each tumult took shape and form from the circumstances of the moment ; sober workmen, going home from their day's labour, were seen to cast down their baskets of tools and become rioters in an instant ; mere boys on errands did the like. In a word, a moral plague ran through the city. The noise, and hurry, and excitement had for hundreds and hundreds an attraction they had no firmness to resist. The contagion spread like a dread fever : an infectious madness, as yet not near its height, seized on new victims every hour, and society began to tremble at their ravings.

It was between two and three o'clock in the afternoon when Gashford looked into the lair described in the last chapter, and, seeing only Barnaby and Dennis there, inquired for Hugh.

He was out, Barnaby told him ; had gone out more than an hour ago ; and had not yet returned.

"Dennis !" said the smiling secretary, in his smoothest voice, as he sat down cross-legged on a barrel, "Dennis !"

The hangman struggled into a sitting posture directly, and, with his eyes wide open, looked towards him.

"How do you do, Dennis?" said Gashford, nodding. "I hope you have suffered no inconvenience from your late exertions, Dennis?"

"I always will say of you, Muster Gashford," returned the hangman, staring at him, "that that 'ere quiet way of yours might almost wake a dead man. It is," he added with a muttered oath—still staring at him in a thoughtful manner—"so awful sly!"

"So distinct, eh, Dennis?"

"Distinct!" he answered, scratching his head, and keeping his eyes upon the secretary's face ; "I seem to hear it, Muster Gashford, in my very bones."

"I am very glad your sense of hearing is so

sharp, and that I succeed in making myself so intelligible," said Gashford in his unvarying, even tone. "Where is your friend?"

Mr. Dennis looked round as in expectation of beholding him asleep upon his bed of straw ; then, remembering that he had seen him go out, replied :

"I can't say where he is, Muster Gashford ; I expected him back afore now. I hope it isn't time that we was busy, Muster Gashford?"

"Nay," said the secretary, "who should know that as well as you? How can I tell you, Dennis? You are perfect master of your own actions, you know, and accountable to nobody—except sometimes to the law, eh?"

Dennis, who was very much baffled by the cool matter-of-course manner of this reply, recovered his self-possession on his professional pursuits being referred to, and pointing towards Barnaby, shook his head and frowned.

"Hush!" cried Barnaby.

"Ah! Do hush about that, Muster Gashford," said the hangman in a low voice ; "pop'lar prejudices—you always forget—Well, Barnaby, my lad, what's the matter?"

"I hear him coming," he answered. "Hark ! Do you mark that? That's his foot! Bless you, I know his step, and his dog's too. Tramp, tramp, pit-pat, on they come together, and, ha, ha, ha!—and here they are!" he cried joyfully, welcoming Hugh with both hands, and then patting him fondly on the back, as if, instead of being the rough companion he was, he had been one of the most prepossessing of men. "Here he is, and safe too! I am glad to see him back again, old Hugh!"

"I'm a Turk if he don't give me a warmer welcome always than any man of sense," said Hugh, shaking hands with him with a kind of ferocious friendship, strange enough to see. "How are you, boy?"

"Hearty!" cried Barnaby, waving his hat. "Ha, ha, ha! And merry too, Hugh! And ready to do anything for the good cause, and the right, and to help the kind, mild, pale-faced gentleman—the lord they used so ill—eh, Hugh?"

"Ay!" returned his friend, dropping his hand, and looking at Gashford for an instant with a changed expression before he spoke to him. "Good day, master!"

"And good day to you," replied the secretary, nursing his leg. "And many good days—whole years of them, I hope. You are heated."

"So would you have been, master," said Hugh, wiping his face, "if you'd been running here as fast as I have."

"You know the news then? Yes, I supposed you would have heard it."

"News! what news?"

"You don't?" cried Gashford, raising his eyebrows with an exclamation of surprise. "Dear me! Come; then I *am* the first to make you acquainted with your distinguished position, after all. Do you see the King's Arms atop?" he smilingly asked, as he took a large paper from his pocket, unfolded it, and held it out for Hugh's inspection.

"Well!" said Hugh. "What's that to me?"

"Much. A great deal," replied the secretary. "Read it."

"I told you, the first time I saw you, that I couldn't read," said Hugh impatiently. "What in the devil's name's inside of it?"

"It is a proclamation from the King in Council," said Gashford, "dated to-day, and offering a reward of five hundred pounds—five hundred pounds is a great deal of money, and a large temptation to some people—to any one who will discover the person or persons most active in demolishing those chapels on Saturday night."

"Is that all?" cried Hugh with an indifferent air. "I knew of that."

"Truly I might have known you did," said Gashford, smiling, and folding up the document again. "Your friend, I might have guessed—indeed, I did guess—was sure to tell you."

"My friend!" stammered Hugh, with an unsuccessful effort to appear surprised. "What friend?"

"Tut, tut—do you suppose I don't know where you have been?" retorted Gashford, rubbing his hands, and beating the back of one on the palm of the other, and looking at him with a cunning eye. "How dull you think me! Shall I say his name?"

"No," said Hugh, with a hasty glance towards Dennis.

"You have also heard from him, no doubt," resumed the secretary after a moment's pause, "that the rioters who have been taken (poor fellows) are committed for trial, and that some very active witnesses have had the temerity to appear against them. Among others"—and here he clenched his teeth, as if he would suppress, by force, some violent words that arose upon his tongue; and spoke very slowly—"among others, a gentleman who saw the work going on in Warwick Street; a Catholic gentleman; one Haredale."

Hugh would have prevented his uttering the word, but it was out already. Hearing the name, Barnaby turned swiftly round.

"Duty, duty, bold Barnaby!" cried Hugh, assuming his wildest and most rapid manner, and thrusting into his hand his staff and flag, which leant against the wall. "Mount guard without loss of time, for we are off upon our expedition. Up, Dennis, and get ready! Take care that no one turns the straw upon my bed, brave Barnaby; we know what's underneath it—eh? Now, master, quick! What you have to say, say speedily, for the little captain and a cluster of 'em are in the fields, and only waiting for us. Sharp's the word, and strike's the action. Quick!"

Barnaby was not proof against this bustle and dispatch. The look of mingled astonishment and anger, which had appeared in his face when he turned towards them, faded from it as the words passed from his memory, like breath from a polished mirror; and grasping the weapon which Hugh forced upon him, he proudly took his station at the door, beyond their hearing.

"You might have spoiled our plans, master," said Hugh. "You, too, of all men!"

"Who would have supposed that *he* would be so quick?" urged Gashford.

"He's as quick sometimes—I don't mean with his hands; for that you know, but with his head—as you, or any man," said Hugh. "Dennis, it's time we were going; they're waiting for us; I came to tell you. Reach me my stick and belt. Here! Lend a hand, master. Fling this over my shoulder, and buckle it behind, will you?"

"Brisk as ever!" said the secretary, adjusting it for him as he desired.

"A man need be brisk to-day; there's brisk work afoot."

"There is, is there?" said Gashford. He said it with such a provoking assumption of ignorance, that Hugh, looking over his shoulder and angrily down upon him, replied:

"Is there? You know there is! Who knows better than you, master, that the first great step to be taken is to make examples of these witnesses, and frighten all men from appearing against us or any of our body any more?"

"There's one we know of," returned Gashford with an expressive smile, "who is at least as well informed upon that subject as you or I."

"If we mean the same gentleman, as I suppose we do," Hugh rejoined softly, "I tell you this—he's as good and quick information about everything as"—here he paused and looked round, as if to make quite sure that the person in question was not within hearing—"as Old Nick himself. Have you done that, master? How slow you are!"



"It's quite fast now," said Gashford, rising. "I say—you didn't find that your friend disapproved of to-day's little expedition? Ha, ha, ha! It is fortunate it jumps so well with the witness policy; for, once planned, it must have been carried out. And now you are going, eh?"

"Now we are going, master!" Hugh replied. "Any parting words?"

"Oh dear no!" said Gashford sweetly. "None!"

"You're sure?" cried Hugh, nudging the grinning Dennis.

"Quite sure, eh, Muster Gashford?" chuckled the hangman.

Gashford paused a moment, struggling with his caution and his malice; then putting himself between the two men, and laying a hand upon the arm of each, said, in a cramped whisper:

"Do not, my good friends—I am sure you will not—forget our talk one night—in your house, Dennis—about this person. No mercy, no quarter, no two beams of his house to be left standing where the builder placed them! Fire, the saying goes, is a good servant, but a bad master. Make it *his* master; he deserves no better. But I am sure you will be firm, I am sure you will be very resolute, I am sure you will remember that he thirsts for your lives, and those of all your brave companions. If you ever acted like staunch fellows, you will do so to-day. Won't you, Dennis—won't you, Hugh?"

The two looked at him, and at each other; then, bursting into a roar of laughter, brandished their staves above their heads, shook hands, and hurried out.

When they had been gone a little time, Gashford followed. They were yet in sight, and hastening to that part of the adjacent fields in which their fellows had already mustered; Hugh was looking back, and flourishing his hat to Barnaby, who, delighted with his trust, replied in the same manner, and then resumed his pacing up and down before the stable door, where his feet had worn a path already. And when Gashford himself was far distant, and looked back for the last time, he was still walking to and fro with the same measured tread; the most devoted and the blithest champion that ever maintained a post, and felt his heart lifted up with a brave sense of duty, and determination to defend it to the last.

Smiling at the simplicity of the poor idiot, Gashford betook himself to Welbeck Street by a different path from that which he knew the rioters would take, and sitting down behind a

curtain in one of the upper windows of Lord George Gordon's house, waited impatiently for their coming. They were so long, that although he knew it had been settled they should come that way, he had a misgiving they must have changed their plans and taken some other route. But at length the roar of voices was heard in the neighbouring fields, and soon afterwards they came thronging past in a great body.

However, they were not all, nor nearly all, in one body, but were, as he soon found, divided into four parties, each of which stopped before the house to give three cheers, and then went on; the leaders crying out in what direction they were going, and calling on the spectators to join them. The first detachment, carrying, by way of banners, some relics of the havoc they had made in Moorfields, proclaimed that they were on their way to Chelsea, whence they would return in the same order, to make, of the spoil they bore, a great bonfire near at hand. The second gave out that they were bound for Wapping, to destroy a chapel; the third, that their place of destination was East Smithfield, and their object the same. All this was done in broad, bright, summer day. Gay carriages and chairs stopped to let them pass, or turned back to avoid them; people on foot stood aside in doorways, or perhaps knocked and begged permission to stand at a window, or in a hall, until the rioters had passed: but nobody interfered with them; and, when they had gone by, everything went on as usual.

There still remained the fourth body, and for that the secretary looked with a most intense eagerness. At last it came up. It was numerous, and composed of picked men; for, as he gazed down among them, he recognised many upturned faces which he knew well—those of Simon Tappertit, Hugh, and Dennis in the front, of course. They halted and cheered, as the others had done; but when they moved again, they did not, like them, proclaim what design they had. Hugh merely raised his hat upon the bludgeon he carried, and, glancing at a spectator on the opposite side of the way, was gone.

Gashford followed the direction of his glance instinctively, and saw, standing on the pavement, and wearing the blue cockade, Sir John Chester. He held his hat an inch or two above his head, to propitiate the mob; and, resting gracefully on his cane, smiling pleasantly, and displaying his dress and person to the very best advantage, looked on in the most tranquil state imaginable. For all that, and quick and dexterous as he was, Gashford had seen him recognise Hugh with the air of a patron. He had

no longer any eyes for the crowd, but fixed his keen regards upon Sir John.

He stood in the same place and posture until the last man in the concourse had turned the corner of the street; then very deliberately took the blue cockade out of his hat; put it carefully in his pocket, ready for the next emergency; refreshed himself with a pinch of snuff; put up his box; and was walking slowly off, when a passing carriage stopped, and a lady's hand let down the glass. Sir John's hat was off again immediately. After a minute's conversation at the carriage window, in which it was apparent that he was vastly entertaining on the subject of the mob, he stepped lightly in, and was driven away.

The secretary smiled, but he had other thoughts to dwell upon, and soon dismissed the topic. Dinner was brought him, but he sent it down untasted; and, in restless paces up and down the room, and constant glances at the clock, and many futile efforts to sit down and read, or go to sleep, or look out of the window, consumed four weary hours. When the dial told him thus much time had crept away, he stole up-stairs to the top of the house, and coming out upon the roof, sat down, with his face towards the east.

Heedless of the fresh air that blew upon his heated brow, of the pleasant meadows from which he turned, of the piles of roofs and chimneys upon which he looked, of the smoke and rising mist he vainly sought to pierce, of the shrill cries of children at their evening sports, the distant hum and turmoil of the town, the cheerful country breath that rustled past to meet it, and to droop and die; he watched, and watched, till it was dark—save for the specks of light that twinkled in the streets below and far away—and, as the darkness deepened, strained his gaze and grew more eager yet.

"Nothing but gloom in that direction still!" he muttered restlessly. "Dog! where is the redness in the sky you promised me?"

#### CHAPTER LIV.

RUMOURS of the prevailing disturbances had, by this time, begun to be pretty generally circulated through the towns and villages round London, and the tidings were everywhere received with that appetite for the marvellous and love of the terrible which have probably been among the natural characteristics

of mankind since the creation of the world. These accounts, however, appeared to many persons at that day—as they would to us at the present, but that we know them to be matter of history—so monstrous and improbable, that a great number of those who were resident at a distance, and who were credulous enough on other points, were really unable to bring their minds to believe that such things could be; and rejected the intelligence they received on all hands, as wholly fabulous and absurd.

Mr. Willet—not so much, perhaps, on account of his having argued and settled the matter with himself, as by reason of his constitutional obstinacy—was one of those who positively refused to entertain the current topic for a moment. On this very evening, and perhaps at the very time when Gashford kept his solitary watch, old John was so red in the face with perpetually shaking his head in contradiction of his three ancient cronies and pot companions, that he was quite a phenomenon to behold, and lighted up the Maypole porch, wherein they sat together, like a monstrous carbuncle in a fairy tale.

"Do you think, sir," said Mr. Willet, looking hard at Solomon Daisy—for it was his custom, in cases of personal altercation, to fasten upon the smallest man in the party—"do you think, sir, that I'm a born fool?"

"No, no, Johnny," returned Solomon, looking round upon the little circle of which he formed a part: "we all know better than that. You're no fool, Johnny. No, no!"

Mr. Cobb and Mr. Parkes shook their heads in unison, muttering, "No, no, Johnny, not you!" But, as such compliments had usually the effect of making Mr. Willet rather more dogged than before, he surveyed them with a look of deep disdain, and returned for answer:

"Then what do you mean by coming here, and telling me that this evening you're a-going to walk up to London together—you three—you—and have the evidence of your own senses? An't," said Mr. Willet, putting his pipe in his mouth with an air of solemn disgust, "an't the evidence of *my* senses enough for you?"

"But we haven't got it, Johnny," pleaded Parkes humbly.

"You haven't got it, sir?" repeated Mr. Willet, eyeing him from top to toe. "You haven't got it, sir? You *have* got it, sir. Don't I tell you that his blessed Majesty King George the Third would no more stand a rioting and rollicking in his streets than he'd stand being crowed over by his own Parliament?"

"Yes, Johnny, but that's your sense—not your senses," said the adventurous Mr. Parkes.



"How do *you* know?" retorted John with great dignity. "You're a contradicting pretty free, you are, sir. How do *you* know which it is? I'm not aware I ever told you, sir."

Mr. Parkes, finding himself in the position of having got into metaphysics without exactly seeing his way out of them, stammered forth an apology, and retreated from the argument. There then ensued a silence of some ten minutes or a quarter of an hour, at the expiration of which period Mr. Willet was observed to rumble and shake with laughter, and presently remarked, in reference to his late adversary, "that he hoped he had tackled him enough." Thereupon Messrs. Cobb and Daisy laughed and nodded, and Parkes was looked upon as thoroughly and effectually put down.

"Do you suppose, if all this was true, that Mr. Haredale would be constantly away from home as he is?" said John after another silence. "Do you think he wouldn't be afraid to leave his house with them two young women in it, and only a couple of men or so?"

"Ay, but then, you know," returned Solomon Daisy, "his house is a goodish way out of London, and they do say that the rioters won't go more than two mile, or three at farthest, off the stones. Besides, you know, some of the Catholic gentlefolks have actually sent trinkets and such-like down here for safety—at least, so the story goes."

"The story goes!" said Mr. Willet testily. "Yes, sir. The story goes that you saw a ghost last March. But nobody believes it."

"Well!" said Solomon, rising, to divert the attention of his two friends, who tittered at this retort: "believed or disbelieved, it's true; and true or not, if we mean to go to London, we must be going at once. So shake hands, Johnny, and good night."

"I shall shake hands," returned the landlord, putting his into his pockets, "with no man as goes to London on such nonsensical errands."

The three cronies were therefore reduced to the necessity of shaking his elbows. Having performed that ceremony, and brought from the house their hats, and sticks, and great-coats, they bade him good night and departed; promising to bring him on the morrow full and true accounts of the real state of the city, and if it were quiet, to give him the full merit of his victory.

John Willet looked after them as they plodded along the road in the rich glow of a summer evening; and knocking the ashes out of his pipe, laughed inwardly at their folly, until his sides were sore. When he had quite exhausted

himself—which took some time, for he laughed as slowly as he thought and spoke—he sat himself comfortably with his back to the house, put his legs upon the bench, then his apron over his face, and fell sound asleep.

How long he slept matters not; but it was for no brief space, for when he awoke, the rich light had faded, the sombre hues of night were falling fast upon the landscape, and a few bright stars were already twinkling overhead. The birds were all at roost, the daisies on the green had closed their fairy hoods, the honeysuckle twining round the porch exhaled its perfume in a twofold degree, as though it lost its coyness at that silent time, and loved to shed its fragrance on the night; the ivy scarcely stirred its deep green leaves. How tranquil, and how beautiful it was!

Was there no sound in the air, besides the gentle rustling of the trees and the grasshopper's merry chirp? Hark! Something very faint and distant, not unlike the murmuring in a sea-shell. Now it grew louder, fainter now, and now it altogether died away. Presently it came again, subsided, came once more, grew louder, fainter—swelled into a roar. It was on the road, and varied with its windings. All at once it burst into a distinct sound—the voices and the tramping feet of many men.

It is questionable whether old John Willet, even then, would have thought of the rioters, but for the cries of his cook and housemaid, who ran screaming up-stairs, and locked themselves into one of the old garrets,—shrieking dismally when they had done so, by way of rendering their place of refuge perfectly secret and secure. These two females did afterwards depone that Mr. Willet, in his consternation, uttered but one word, and called that up the stairs in a stentorian voice six distinct times. But as this word was a monosyllable, which, however inoffensive when applied to the quadruped it denotes, is highly reprehensible when used in connection with females of unimpeachable character, many persons were inclined to believe that the young women laboured under some hallucination caused by excessive fear; and that their ears deceived them.

Be this as it may, John Willet, in whom the very uttermost extent of dull-headed perplexity supplied the place of courage, stationed himself in the porch, and waited for their coming up. Once, it dimly occurred to him that there was a kind of door to the house, which had a lock and bolts; and, at the same time, some shadowy ideas of shutters to the lower windows fitted through his brain. But he stood stock-still,

looking down the road in the direction in which the noise was rapidly advancing, and did not so much as take his hands out of his pockets.

He had not to wait long. A dark mass, looming through a cloud of dust, soon became visible; the mob quickened their pace; shouting and whooping like savages, they came rushing on pell-mell; and in a few seconds he was banded from hand to hand, in the heart of a crowd of men.

"Holloa!" cried a voice he knew, as the man who spoke came cleaving through the throng. "Where is he? Give him to me. Don't hurt him. How now, old Jack? Ha, ha, ha!"

Mr. Willet looked at him, and saw it was Hugh; but he said nothing, and thought nothing.

"These lads are thirsty, and must drink!" cried Hugh, thrusting him back towards the house. "Bustle, Jack, bustle. Show us the best—the very best—the over-proof that you keep for your own drinking, Jack!"

John faintly articulated the words, "Who's to pay?"

"He says 'Who's to pay?'" cried Hugh with a roar of laughter which was loudly echoed by the crowd. Then, turning to John, he added, "Pay! Why, nobody."

John stared round at the mass of faces—some grinning, some fierce, some lighted up by torches, some indistinct, some dusky and shadowy: some looking at him, some at his house, some at each other—and while he was, as he thought, in the very act of doing so, found himself, without any consciousness of having moved, in the bar; sitting down in an arm-chair, and watching the destruction of his property, as if it were some queer play or entertainment of an astonishing and stupefying nature, but having no reference to himself—that he could make out—all.

Yes. Here was the bar—the bar that the boldest never entered without special invitation—the sanctuary, the mystery, the hallowed ground: here it was, crammed with men, clubs, sticks, torches, pistols; filled with a deafening noise, oaths, shouts, screams, hootings; changed all at once into a bear-garden, a madhouse, an infernal temple: men darting in and out by door and window, smashing the glass, turning the taps, drinking liquor out of china punch-bowls, sitting astride of casks, smoking private and personal pipes, cutting down the sacred grove of lemons, hacking and hewing at the celebrated cheese, breaking open inviolable drawers, putting things in their pockets which didn't belong to them, dividing his own money

before his own eyes, wantonly wasting, breaking, pulling down, and tearing up: nothing quiet, nothing private: men everywhere—above, below, overhead, in the bedrooms, in the kitchen, in the yard, in the stables—clambering in at windows when there were doors wide open; dropping out of windows when the stairs were handy; leaping over the banisters into chasms of passages: new faces and figures presenting themselves every instant—some yelling, some singing, some fighting, some breaking glass and crockery, some laying the dust with the liquor they couldn't drink, some ringing the bells till they pulled them down, others beating them with pokers till they beat them into fragments: more men still—more, more, more—swarming on like insects: noise, smoke, light, darkness, frolic, anger, laughter, groans, plunder, fear, and ruin!

Nearly all the time while John looked on at this bewildering scene, Hugh kept near him; and though he was the loudest, wildest, most destructive villain there, he saved his old master's bones a score of times. Nay, even when Mr. Tappetit, excited by liquor, came up, and, in assertion of his prerogative, politely kicked John Willet on the shins, Hugh bade him return the compliment; and if old John had had sufficient presence of mind to understand this whispered direction, and to profit by it, he might no doubt, under Hugh's protection, have done so with impunity.

At length the band began to reassemble outside the house, and to call to those within to join them, for they were losing time. These murmurs increasing, and attaining a high pitch, Hugh, and some of those who yet lingered in the bar, and who plainly were the leaders of the troop, took counsel together, apart, as to what was to be done with John to keep him quiet until their Chigwell work was over. Some proposed to set the house on fire, and leave him in it; others, that he should be reduced to a state of temporary insensibility by knocking on the head; others, that he should be sworn to sit where he was until to-morrow at the same hour; others, again, that he should be gagged and taken off with them, under a sufficient guard. All these propositions being overruled, it was concluded, at last, to bind him in his chair, and the word was passed for Dennis.

"Lookee here, Jack!" said Hugh, striding up to him. "We're going to tie you, hand and foot, but otherwise you won't be hurt. D'ye hear?"

John Willet looked at another man, as if he didn't know which was the speaker, and muttered



something about an ordinary every Sunday at two o'clock.

"You won't be hurt I tell you, Jack—do you hear me?" roared Hugh, impressing the assurance upon him by means of a heavy blow on the back. "He's so dead scared, he's wool-gathering, I think. Give him a drop of something to drink here. Hand over, one of you."

A glass of liquor being passed forward, Hugh poured the contents down old John's throat. Mr. Willet feebly smacked his lips, thrust his hand into his pocket, and inquired what was to pay; adding, as he looked vacantly round, that he believed there was a trifle of broken glass—

"He's out of his senses for the time, it's my belief," said Hugh, after shaking him, without any visible effect upon his system, until his keys rattled in his pocket. "Where's that Dennis?"

The word was again passed, and presently Mr. Dennis, with a long cord bound about his middle, something after the manner of a friar, came hurrying in, attended by a body-guard of half-a-dozen of his men.

"Come! Be alive here!" cried Hugh, stamping his foot upon the ground. "Make haste!"

Dennis, with a wink and a nod, unwound the cord from about his person, and raising his eyes to the ceiling, looked all over it, and round the walls and cornice, with a curious eye; then shook his head.

"Move, man, can't you?" cried Hugh, with another impatient stamp of his foot. "Are we to wait here till the cry has gone for ten miles round, and our work's interrupted?"

"It's all very fine talking, brother," answered Dennis, stepping towards him; "but unless"—and here he whispered in his ear—"unless we do it over the door, it can't be done at all in this here room."

"What can't?" Hugh demanded.

"What can't?" retorted Dennis. "Why, the old man can't."

"Why, you weren't going to hang him?" cried Hugh.

"No, brother?" returned the hangman with a stare. "What else?"

Hugh made no answer, but, snatching the rope from his companion's hand, proceeded to bind old John himself; but his very first move was so bungling and unskilful, that Mr. Dennis entreated, almost with tears in his eyes, that he might be permitted to perform the duty. Hugh consenting, he achieved it in a twinkling.

"There!" he said, looking mournfully at John Willet, who displayed no more emotion in his bonds than he had shown out of them. "That's what I call pretty, and workmanlike. He's quite

a pieter now. But, brother, just a word with you—now that he's ready trussed, as one may say, wouldn't it be better for all parties if we was to work him off? It would read uncommon well in the newspapers, it would indeed. 'The public would think a great deal more on us!'

Hugh, inferring what his companion meant rather from his gestures than his technical mode of expressing himself (to which, as he was ignorant of his calling, he wanted the clue), rejected this proposition for the second time, and gave the word "Forward!" which was echoed by a hundred voices from without.

"To the Warren!" shouted Dennis as he ran out, followed by the rest. "A witness's house, my lads!"

A loud yell followed, and the whole throng hurried off, mad for pillage and destruction. Hugh lingered behind for a few moments to stimulate himself with more drink, and to set all the taps running, a few of which had accidentally been spared; then, glancing round the despoiled and plundered room, through whose shattered window the rioters had thrust the maypole itself,—for even that had been sawn down,—lighted a torch, clapped the mute and motionless John Willet on the back, and waving his light above his head, and uttering a fierce shout, hastened after his companions.

## CHAPTER LV.

**J**OHAN WILLET, left alone in his dismantled bar, continued to sit staring about him; awake as to his eyes, certainly, but with all his powers of reason and reflection in a sound and dreamless sleep. He looked round upon the room which had been for years, and was within an hour ago, the pride of his heart; and not a muscle of his face was moved. The night, without, looked black and cold through the dreary gaps in the casement; the precious liquids, now nearly leaked away, dripped with a hollow sound upon the floor; the maypole peered ruefully in through the broken window, like the bowsprit of a wrecked ship; the ground might have been the bottom of the sea, it was so strewn with precious fragments. Currents of air rushed in as the old doors jarred and creaked upon their hinges; the candles flickered and guttered down, and made long winding-sheets; the cheery deep red curtains flapped and fluttered idly in the wind; even the stout Dutch kegs, overthrown and

lying empty in dark corners, seemed the mere husks of good fellows whose jollity had departed, and who could kindle with a friendly glow no more. John saw this desolation, and yet saw it not. He was perfectly contented to sit there, staring at it, and felt no more indignation or discomfort in his bonds than if they had been robes of honour. So far as he was personally concerned, old Time lay snoring, and the world stood still.

Save for the dripping from the barrels, the rustling of such light fragments of destruction as the wind affected, and the dull creaking of the open doors, all was profoundly quiet: indeed, these sounds, like the ticking of the death-watch in the night, only made the silence they invaded deeper and more apparent. But, quiet or noisy, it was all one to John. If a train of heavy artillery could have come up, and commenced ball practice outside the window, it would have been all the same to him. He was a long way beyond surprise. A ghost couldn't have overtaken him.

By-and-by he heard a footstep—a hurried, and yet cautious footstep—coming on towards the house. It stopped, advanced again, then seemed to go quite round it. Having done that, it came beneath the window, and a head looked in.

It was strongly relieved against the darkness outside by the glare of the guttering candles. A pale, worn, withered face; the eyes—but that was owing to its gaunt condition—unnaturally large and bright; the hair a grizzled black. It gave a searching glance all round the room, and a deep voice said:

“Are you alone in this house?”

John made no sign, though the question was repeated twice, and he heard it distinctly. After a moment's pause, the man got in at the window. John was not at all surprised at this either. There had been so much getting in and out of window in the course of the last hour or so, that he had quite forgotten the door, and seemed to have lived among such exercises from infancy.

The man wore a large, dark, faded cloak and a slouched hat; he walked up close to John, and looked at him. John returned the compliment with interest.

“How long have you been sitting thus?” said the man.

John considered, but nothing came of it.

“Which way have the party gone?”

Some wandering speculations relative to the fashion of the stranger's boots got into Mr. Willet's mind by some accident or other, but

they got out again in a hurry, and left him in his former state.

“You would do well to speak,” said the man; “you may keep a whole skin, though you have nothing else left that can be hurt. Which way have the party gone?”

“That!” said John, finding his voice all at once, and nodding with perfect good faith—he couldn't point; he was so tightly bound—in exactly the opposite direction to the right one.

“You lie!” said the man angrily, and with a threatening gesture. “I came that way. You would betray me.”

It was so evident that John's imperturbability was not assumed, but was the result of the late proceedings under his roof, that the man stayed his hand in the very act of striking him, and turned away.

John looked after him without so much as a twitch in a single nerve of his face. He seized a glass, and holding it under one of the little casks until a few drops were collected, drank them greedily off; then throwing it down upon the floor impatiently, he took the vessel in his hands and drained it into his throat. Some scraps of bread and meat were scattered about, and on these he fell next; eating them with voracity, and pausing every now and then to listen for some fancied noise outside. When he had refreshed himself in this manner with violent haste, and raised another barrel to his lips, he pulled his hat upon his brow as though he were about to leave the house, and turned to John.

“Where are your servants?”

Mr. Willet indistinctly remembered to have heard the rioters calling to them to throw the key of the room in which they were, out of window, for their keeping. He therefore replied, “Locked up.”

“Well for them if they remain quiet, and well for you if you do the like,” said the man. “Now show me the way the party went.”

This time Mr. Willet indicated it correctly. The man was hurrying to the door, when suddenly there came towards them, on the wind, the loud and rapid tolling of an alarm bell, and then a bright and vivid glare streamed up, which illumined, not only the whole chamber, but all the country.

It was not the sudden change from darkness to this dreadful light, it was not the sound of distant shrieks and shouts of triumph, it was not this dread invasion of the serenity and peace of night, that drove the man back as though a thunderbolt had struck him. It was the Bell. If the ghastliest shape the human mind has ever pictured in its wildest dreams had risen up



before him, he could not have staggered backward from its touch as he did from the first sound of that loud iron voice. With eyes that started from his head, his limbs convulsed, his face most horrible to see, he raised one arm high up into the air, and holding something visionary back and down with his other hand, drove at it as though he held a knife and stabbed it to the heart. He clutched his hair, and stopped his ears, and travelled madly round and round; then gave a frightful cry, and with it rushed away: still, still the Bell tolled on, and seemed to follow him—louder and louder, hotter and hotter yet. The glare grew brighter, the roar of voices deeper; the crash of heavy bodies falling shook the air; bright streams of sparks rose up into the sky; but louder than them all—rising faster far to Heaven—a million times more fierce and furious—pouring forth dreadful secrets after its long silence—speaking the language of the dead—the Bell—the Bell!

What hunt of spectres could surpass that dread pursuit and flight? Had there been a legion of them on his track, he could have better borne it. They would have had a beginning and an end, but here all space was full. The one pursuing voice was everywhere: it sounded in the earth, the air; shook the long grass, and howled among the trembling trees. The echoes caught it up; the owls hooted as it flew upon the breeze; the nightingale was silent, and hid herself among the thickest boughs: it seemed to goad and urge the angry fire, and lash it into madness; everything was steeped in one prevailing red; the glow was everywhere; nature was drenched in blood: still the remorseless crying of that awful voice—the Bell, the Bell!

It ceased; but not in his ears. The knell was at his heart. No work of man had ever voice like that which sounded there, and warned him that it cried unceasingly to Heaven. Who could hear that bell, and know not what it said? There was murder in its every note—cruel, relentless, savage murder—the murder of a confiding man by one who held his every trust. Its ringing summoned phantoms from their graves. What face was that, in which a friendly smile changed to a look of half-incredulous horror, which stiffened for a moment into one of pain, then changed again into an imploring glance at Heaven, and so fell idly down with upturned eyes, like the dead stags he had often peeped at when a little child: shrinking and shuddering—there was a dreadful thing to think of now!—and clinging to an apron as he looked? He sank upon the ground, and, grovelling down

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as if he would dig himself a place to hide in, covered his face and ears: but no, no, no—a hundred walls and roofs of brass would not shut out that bell, for in it spoke the wrathful voice of God, and from that voice the whole wide universe could not afford a refuge!

While he rushed up and down, not knowing where to turn, and while he lay crouching there, the work went briskly on indeed. When they left the Maypole, the rioters formed into a solid body, and advanced at a quick pace towards the Warren. Rumour of their approach having gone before, they found the garden doors fast closed, the windows made secure, and the house profoundly dark; not a light being visible in any portion of the building. After some fruitless ringing at the bells, and beating at the iron gates, they drew off a few paces to reconnoitre, and confer upon the course it would be best to take.

Very little conference was needed when all were bent upon one desperate purpose, infuriated with liquor, and flushed with successful riot. The word being given to surround the house, some climbed the gates, or dropped into the shallow trench, and scaled the garden wall, while others pulled down the solid iron fence, and while they made a breach to enter by, made deadly weapons of the bars. The house being completely encircled, a small number of men were dispatched to break open a tool-shed in the garden; and, during their absence on this errand, the remainder contented themselves with knocking violently at the doors, and calling to those within to come down and open them on peril of their lives.

No answer being returned to this repeated summons, and the detachment who had been sent away coming back with an accession of pickaxes, spades, and hoes, they—together with those who had such arms already, or carried (as many did) axes, poles, and crowbars—struggled into the foremost rank, ready to beset the doors and windows. They had not at this time more than a dozen lighted torches among them; but, when these preparations were completed, flaming links were distributed, and passed from hand to hand with such rapidity, that, in a minute's time, at least two-thirds of the whole roaring mass bore, each man in his hand, a blazing brand. Whirling these about their heads, they raised a loud shout, and fell to work upon the doors and windows.

Amidst the clattering of heavy blows, the rattling of broken glass, the cries and execrations of the mob, and all the din and turmoil of the scene, Hugh and his friends kept together at the

turret door where Mr. Haredale had last admitted him and old John Willet; and spent their united force on that. It was a strong old oaken door, guarded by good bolts and a heavy bar, but it soon went crashing in upon the narrow stairs behind, and made, as it were, a platform to facilitate their tearing up into the rooms above. Almost at the same moment a dozen other points were forced, and at every one the crowd poured in like water.

A few armed servant-men were posted in the hall, and, when the rioters forced an entrance there, they fired some half-a-dozen shots. But these taking no effect, and the concourse coming on like an army of devils, they only thought of consulting their own safety, and retreated, echoing their assailants' cries, and hoping in the confusion to be taken for rioters themselves; in which stratagem they succeeded, with the exception of one old man who was never heard of again, and was said to have had his brains beaten out with an iron bar (one of his fellows reported that he had seen the old man fall), and to have been afterwards burnt in the flames.

The besiegers, being now in complete possession of the house, spread themselves over it from garret to cellar, and plied their demon labours fiercely. While some small parties kindled bonfires underneath the windows, others broke up the furniture, and cast the fragments down to feed the flames below; where the apertures in the wall (windows no longer) were large enough, they threw out tables, chests of drawers, beds, mirrors, pictures, and flung them whole into the fire; while every fresh addition to the blazing masses was received with shouts, and howls, and yells, which added new and dismal terrors to the conflagration. Those who had axes, and had spent their fury on the movables, chopped and tore down the doors and window frames, broke up the flooring, hewed away the rafters, and buried men who lingered in the upper rooms in heaps of ruins. Some searched the drawers, the chests, the boxes, writing-desks, and closets, for jewels, plate, and money; while others, less mindful of gain and more mad for destruction, cast their whole contents into the courtyard without examination, and called to those below to heap them on the blaze. Men who had been into the cellars, and had staved the casks, rushed to and fro stark mad, setting fire to all they saw—often to the dresses of their own friends—and kindling the building in so many parts that some had no time for escape, and were seen, with drooping hands and blackened faces, hanging senseless on the window-sills to which they had crawled,

until they were sucked and drawn into the burning gulf. The more the fire crackled and raged, the wilder and more cruel the men grew; as though, moving in that element, they became fiends, and changed their earthly nature for the qualities that give delight in hell.

The burning pile, revealing rooms and passages red-hot, through gaps made in the crumbling walls; the tributary fires that licked the outer bricks and stones, with their long forked tongues, and ran up to meet the glowing mass within; the shining of the flames upon the villains who looked on and fed them; the roaring of the angry blaze, so bright and high that it seemed in its rapacity to have swallowed up the very smoke; the living flakes the wind bore rapidly away, and hurried on with, like a storm of fiery snow; the noiseless breaking of great beams of wood, which fell like feathers on the heap of ashes, and crumbled in the very act to sparks and powder; the lurid tinge that overspread the sky, and the darkness, very deep by contrast, which prevailed around; the exposure to the coarse, common gaze of every little nook which usages of home had made a sacred place, and the destruction by rude hands of every little household favourite which old associations made a dear and precious thing: all this taking place—not among pitying looks and friendly murmurs of compassion, but brutal shouts and exultations, which seemed to make the very rats who stood by the old house too long, creatures with some claim upon the pity and regard of those its roof had sheltered—combined to form a scene never to be forgotten by those who saw it, and were not actors in the work, so long as life endured.

And who were they? The alarm bell rang—and it was pulled by no faint or hesitating hands—for a long time; but not a soul was seen. Some of the insurgents said that when it ceased, they heard the shrieks of women, and saw some garments fluttering in the air, as a party of men bore away no unresisting burdens. No one could say that this was true or false in such an uproar; but where was Hugh? Who among them had seen him since the forcing of the doors? The cry spread through the body. Where was Hugh?

"Here!" he hoarsely cried, appearing from the darkness, out of breath, and blackened with the smoke. "We have done all we can; the fire is burning itself out; and even the corners where it hasn't spread are nothing but heaps of ruins. Disperse, my lads, while the coast's clear; get back by different ways; and meet as usual." With that, he disappeared again,—



contrary to his wont, for he was always first to advance, and last to go away,—leaving them to follow homewards as they would.

It was not an easy task to draw off such a throng. If Bedlam gates had been flung open wide, there would not have issued forth such maniacs as the frenzy of that night had made. There were men there who danced and trampled on the beds of flowers as though they trod down human enemies, and wrenched them from the stalks like savages who twisted human necks. There were men who cast their lighted torches in the air, and suffered them to fall upon their heads and faces, blistering the skin with deep unseemly burns. There were men who rushed up to the fire, and paddled in it with their hands as if in water; and others who were restrained by force from plunging in to gratify their deadly longing. On the skull of one drunken lad—not twenty, by his looks—who lay upon the ground with a bottle to his mouth, the lead from the roof came streaming down in a shower of liquid fire, white-hot, melting his head like wax. When the scattered parties were collected, men—living yet, but singed as with hot irons—were plucked out of the cellars, and carried off upon the shoulders of others, who strove to wake them, as they went along, with ribald jokes, and left them, dead, in the passages of hospitals. But of all the howling throng not one learnt mercy from, or sickened at, these sights; nor was the fierce, besotted, senseless rage of one man glutted.

Slowly, and in small clusters, with hoarse hurrahs and repetitions of their usual cry, the assembly dropped away. The last few red-eyed stragglers reeled after those who had gone before; the distant noise of men calling to each other, and whistling for others whom they missed, grew fainter and fainter; at length even these sounds died away, and silence reigned alone.

Silence indeed! The glare of the flames had sunk into a fitful flashing light; and the gentle stars, invisible till now, looked down upon the blackening heap. A dull smoke hung upon the ruin, as though to hide it from those eyes of Heaven; and the wind forbore to move it. Bare walls, roof open to the sky—chambers where the beloved dead had, many and many a fair day, risen to new life and energy; where so many dear ones had been sad and merry; which were connected with so many thoughts and hopes, regrets and changes—all gone. Nothing left but a dull and dreary blank—a smouldering heap of dust and ashes—the silence and solitude of utter desolation.

## CHAPTER LVI.

**T**HE Maypole cronies, little dreaming of the change so soon to come upon their favourite haunt, struck through the Forest path upon their way to London; and avoiding the main road, which was hot and dusty, kept to the by-paths and the fields. As they drew nearer to their destination, they began to make inquiries of the people whom they passed concerning the riots, and the truth or falsehood of the stories they had heard. The answers went far beyond any intelligence that had spread to quiet Chigwell. One man told them that that afternoon the Guards, conveying to Newgate some rioters who had been re-examined, had been set upon by the mob, and compelled to retreat; another, that the houses of two witnesses near Clare Market were about to be pulled down when he came away; another, that Sir George Saville's house in Leicester Fields was to be burned that night, and that it would go hard with Sir George if he fell into the people's hands, as it was he who had brought in the Catholic bill. All accounts agreed that the mob were out in stronger numbers and more numerous parties than had yet appeared; that the streets were unsafe; that no man's house or life was worth an hour's purchase; that the public consternation was increasing every moment; and that many families had already fled the city. One fellow who wore the popular colour damned them for not having cockades in their hats, and bade them set a good watch to-morrow night upon the prison doors, for the locks would have a straining; another asked if they were fire-proof, that they walked abroad without the distinguishing mark of all good and true men; and a third who rode on horseback, and was quite alone, ordered them to throw, each man a shilling, in his hat, towards the support of the rioters. Although they were afraid to refuse compliance with this demand, and were much alarmed by these reports, they agreed, having come so far, to go forward and see the real state of things with their own eyes. So they pushed on quicker, as men do who are excited by portentous news; and ruminating on what they had heard, spoke little to each other.

It was now night, and as they came nearer to the city, they had dismal confirmation of this intelligence in three great fires, all close together, which burnt fiercely, and were gloomily reflected in the sky. Arriving in the immediate suburbs, they found that almost every house had chalked

upon its door, in large characters, "No Popery," that the shops were shut, and that alarm and anxiety were depicted in every face they passed.

Noting these things with a degree of apprehension which neither of the three cared to impart, in its full extent, to his companions, they came to a turnpike gate, which was shut. They were passing through the turnstile on the path, when a horseman rode up from London at a hard gallop, and called to the toll-keeper, in a voice of great agitation, to open quickly in the name of God.

The adjuration was so earnest and vehement, that the man, with a lantern in his hand, came running out—toll-keeper though he was—and was about to throw the gate open, when happening to look behind him, he exclaimed, "Good Heaven, what's that? Another fire!"

At this the three turned their heads, and saw in the distance—straight in the direction whence they had come—a broad sheet of flame, casting a threatening light upon the clouds, which glimmered as though the conflagration were behind them, and showed like a wrathful sunset.

"My mind misgives me," said the horseman, "or I know from what far building those flames come. Don't stand aghast, my good fellow. Open the gate!"

"Sir," cried the man, laying his hand upon his horse's bridle as he let him through: "I know you now, sir; be advised by me; do not go on. I saw them pass, and know what kind of men they are. You will be murdered."

"So be it!" said the horseman, looking intently towards the fire, and not at him who spoke.

"But, sir—sir," cried the man, grasping at his rein more tightly yet, "if you do go on, wear the blue ribbon. Here, sir," he added, taking one from his own hat, "it's necessity, not choice, that makes me wear it: it's love of life and home, sir. Wear it for this one night, sir; only for this one night."

"Do!" cried the three friends, pressing round his horse. "Mr. Haredale—worthy sir—good gentleman—pray be persuaded."

"Who's that?" cried Mr. Haredale, stooping down to look. "Did I hear Daisy's voice?"

"You did, sir," cried the little man. "Do be persuaded, sir. This gentleman says very true. Your life may hang upon it."

"Are you," said Mr. Haredale abruptly, "afraid to come with me?"

"I, sir? N-n-no."

"Put that ribbon in your hat. If we meet the rioters, swear that I took you prisoner for wearing it. I will tell them so with my own

lips; for, as I hope for mercy when I die, I will take no quarter from them, nor shall they have quarter from me, if we come hand to hand to-night. Up here—behind me—quick! Clasp me tight round the body, and fear nothing."

In an instant they were riding away at full gallop, in a dense cloud of dust, and speeding on like hunters in a dream.

It was well the good horse knew the road he traversed, for never once—no, never once in all the journey—did Mr. Haredale cast his eyes upon the ground, or turn them, for an instant, from the light towards which they sped so madly. Once he said in a low voice, "It *is* my house," but that was the only time he spoke. When they came to dark and doubtful places, he never forgot to put his hand upon the little man to hold him more securely in his seat, but he kept his head erect, and his eyes fixed on the fire, then and always.

The road was dangerous enough, for they went the nearest way—headlong—far from the highway—by lonely lanes and paths, where waggon wheels had worn deep ruts; where hedge and ditch hemmed in the narrow strip of ground; and tall trees, arching overhead, made it profoundly dark. But on, on, on, with neither stop nor stumble, till they reached the Maypole door, and could plainly see that the fire began to fade, as if for want of fuel.

"Down—for one moment—for but one moment," said Mr. Haredale, helping Daisy to the ground, and following himself. "Willet—Willet—where are my niece and servants?—Willet!"

Crying to him distractedly, he rushed into the bar.—The landlord bound and fastened to his chair; the place dismantled, stripped, and pulled about his ears;—nobody could have taken shelter here.

He was a strong man, accustomed to restrain himself, and suppress his strong emotions; but this preparation for what was to follow—though he had seen that fire burning, and knew that his house must be razed to the ground—was more than he could bear. He covered his face with his hands for a moment, and turned away his head.

"Johnny, Johnny," said Solomon—and the simple-hearted fellow cried outright, and wrung his hands—"oh, dear old Johnny, here's a change! That the Maypole bar should come to this, and we should live to see it! The old Warren too, Johnny—Mr. Haredale—oh, Johnny, what a piteous sight this is!"

Pointing to Mr. Haredale as he said these words, little Solomon Daisy put his elbows on the back of Mr. Willet's chair, and fairly blubbered on his shoulder.



While Solomon was speaking, old John sat, mute as a stock-fish, staring at him with an unearthly glare, and displaying, by every possible symptom, entire and complete unconsciousness. But, when Solomon was silent again,

John followed, with his great round eyes, the direction of his looks, and did appear to have some dawning distant notion that somebody had come to see him.

"You know us, don't you, Johnny?" said



"FLUNG ITSELF UPON THE FOREMOST ONE, KNELT DOWN UPON ITS BREAST, AND CLUTCHED ITS THROAT WITH BOTH HANDS."

the little clerk, rapping himself on the breast. "Daisy you know—Chigwell Church—bell-ringer—little desk on Sundays—eh, Johnny?"

Mr. Willet reflected for a few moments, and then muttered, as it were mechanically: "Let us sing to the praise and glory of——"

"Yes, to be sure," cried the little man hastily; "that's it—that's me, Johnny. You're all right now, an't you? Say you're all right, Johnny."

"All right?" pondered Mr. Willet, as if that were a matter entirely between himself and his conscience. "All right? Ah!"

"They haven't been misusing you with sticks, or pokers, or any other blunt instruments—have they, Johnny?" asked Solomon, with a very anxious glance at Mr. Willet's head. "They didn't beat you, did they?"

John knitted his brow; looked downwards, as if he were mentally engaged in some arithmetical calculation; then upwards, as if the total would not come at his call; then at Solomon Daisy, from his eyebrow to his shoe-buckle; then very slowly round the bar. And then a great, round, leaden-looking, and not at all transparent tear came rolling out of each eye, and he said, as he shook his head:

"If they'd only had the goodness to murder me, I'd have thanked 'em kindly."

"No, no, no, don't say that, Johnny," whimpered his little friend. "It's very, very bad, but not quite so bad as that. No, no!"

"Lookee here, sir!" cried John, turning his rueful eyes on Mr. Haredale, who had dropped on one knee, and was hastily beginning to untie his bonds. "Lookee here, sir! The very maypole—the old dumb maypole—stares in at the winder, as if it said, 'John Willet, John Willet, let's go and pitch ourselves in the highest pool of water as is deep enough to hold us; for our day is over!'"

"Don't, Johnny, don't," cried his friend: no less affected by this mournful effort of Mr. Willet's imagination than by the sepulchral tone in which he had spoken for the maypole. "Please don't, Johnny!"

"Your loss is great, and your misfortune a heavy one," said Mr. Haredale, looking restlessly towards the door: "and this is not a time to comfort you. If it were, I am in no condition to do so. Before I leave you, tell me one thing, and try to tell me plainly, I implore you. Have you seen or heard of Emma?"

"No!" said Mr. Willet.

"Nor any one but these bloodhounds?"

"No!"

"They rode away, I trust in Heaven, before these dreadful scenes began," said Mr. Haredale, who, between his agitation, his eagerness to mount his horse again, and the dexterity with which the cords were tied, had scarcely yet undone one knot. "A knife, Daisy!"

"You didn't," said John, looking about as though he had lost his pocket-handkerchief, or some such slight article—"either of you gentlemen—see—a—a coffin anywheres, did you?"

"Willet!" cried Mr. Haredale. Solomon dropped the knife, and instantly becoming limp from head to foot, exclaimed, "Good gracious!"

"—Because," said John, not at all regarding

them, "a dead man called a little time ago, on his way yonder. I could have told you what name was on the plate, if he had brought his coffin with him, and left it behind. If he didn't, it don't signify."

His landlord, who had listened to these words with breathless attention, started that moment to his feet; and, without a word, drew Solomon Daisy to the door, mounted his horse, took him up behind again, and flew rather than galloped towards the pile of ruins, which that day's sun had shone upon, a stately house. Mr. Willet stared after them, listened, looked down upon himself to make quite sure that he was still unbound, and, without any manifestation of impatience, disappointment, or surprise, gently relapsed into the condition from which he had so imperfectly recovered.

Mr. Haredale tied his horse to the trunk of a tree, and grasping his companion's arm, stole softly along the footpath, and into what had been the garden of his house. He stopped for an instant to look upon its smoking walls, and at the stars that shone through the roof and floor upon the heap of crumbling ashes. Solomon glanced timidly in his face, but his lips were tightly pressed together, a resolute and stern expression sat upon his brow, and not a tear, a look, or gesture indicating grief, escaped him.

He drew his sword; felt for a moment in his breast, as though he carried other arms about him; then, grasping Solomon by the wrist again, went with a cautious step all round the house. He looked into every doorway and gap in the wall; retraced his steps at every rustling of the air among the leaves; and searched in every shadowed nook with outstretched hands. Thus they made the circuit of the building; but they returned to the spot from which they had set out, without encountering any human being, or finding the least trace of any concealed straggler.

After a short pause, Mr. Haredale shouted twice or thrice. Then cried aloud, "Is there any one in hiding here who knows my voice? There is nothing to fear now. If any of my people are here, I entreat them to answer!" He called them all by name; his voice was echoed in many mournful tones; then all was silent as before.

They were standing near the foot of the turret where the alarm bell hung. The fire had raged there, and the floors had been sawn, and hewn, and beaten down, besides. It was open to the night; but a part of the staircase still remained, winding upward from a great mound of dust and cinders. Fragments of the jagged and



broken steps offered an insecure and giddy footing here and there, and then were lost again behind protruding angles of the wall, or in the deep shadows cast upon it by other portions of the ruin; for by this time the moon had risen, and shone brightly.

As they stood here, listening to the echoes as they died away, and hoping in vain to hear a voice they knew, some of the ashes in this turret slipped and rolled down. Startled by the least noise in that melancholy place, Solomon looked up at his companion's face, and saw that he had turned towards the spot, and that he watched and listened keenly.

He covered the little man's mouth with his hand, and looked again. Instantly, with kindling eyes, he bade him on his life keep still, and neither speak nor move. Then holding his breath, and stooping down, he stole into the turret, with his drawn sword in his hand, and disappeared.

Terrified to be left there by himself, under such desolate circumstances, and after all he had seen and heard that night, Solomon would have followed, but there had been something in Mr. Haredale's manner and his look, the recollection of which held him spell-bound. He stood rooted to the spot; and, scarcely venturing to breathe, looked up with mingled fear and wonder.

Again the ashes slipped and rolled—very, very softly—again—and then again, as though they crumbled underneath the tread of a stealthy foot. And now a figure was dimly visible; climbing very softly; and often stopping to look down; now it pursued its difficult way; and now it was hidden from the view again.

It emerged once more into the shadowy and uncertain light—higher now, but not much, for the way was steep and toilsome, and its progress very slow. What phantom of the brain did he pursue; and why did he look down so constantly? He knew he was alone. Surely his mind was not affected by that night's loss and agony. He was not about to throw himself headlong from the summit of the tottering wall. Solomon turned sick, and clasped his hands. His limbs trembled beneath him, and a cold sweat broke out upon his pallid face.

If he complied with Mr. Haredale's last injunction now, it was because he had not the power to speak or move. He strained his gaze, and fixed it on a patch of moonlight, into which, if he continued to ascend, he must soon emerge. When he appeared there, he would try to call to him.

Again the ashes slipped and crumbled; some

stones rolled down, and fell with a dull, heavy sound upon the ground below. He kept his eyes upon the piece of moonlight. The figure was coming on, for its shadow was already thrown upon the wall. Now it appeared—and now looked round at him—and now—

The horror-stricken clerk uttered a scream that pierced the air, and cried, "The ghost! The ghost!"

Long before the echo of his cry had died away, another form rushed out into the light, flung itself upon the foremost one, knelt down upon its breast, and clutched its throat with both hands.

"Villain!" cried Mr. Haredale in a terrible voice—for it was he. "Dead and buried, as all men supposed through your infernal arts, but reserved by Heaven for this—at last—at last—I have you. You, whose hands are red with my brother's blood, and that of his faithful servant, shed to conceal your own atrocious guilt.—You, Rudge, double murderer and monster, I arrest you in the name of God, who has delivered you into my hands. No. Though you had the strength of twenty men," he added, as the murderer writhed and struggled, "you could not escape me, or loosen my grasp to-night!"

## CHAPTER LVII.

**B**ARNABY, armed as we have seen, continued to pace up and down before the stable door; glad to be alone again, and heartily rejoicing in the unaccustomed silence and tranquillity. After the whirl of noise and riot in which the last two days had been passed, the pleasures of solitude and peace were enhanced a thousand-fold. He felt quite happy; and, as he leaned upon his staff and mused, a bright smile overspread his face, and none but cheerful visions floated into his brain.

Had he no thoughts of her whose sole delight he was, and whom he had unconsciously plunged in such bitter sorrow and such deep affliction? Oh yes! She was at the heart of all his cheerful hopes and proud reflections. It was she whom all this honour and distinction were to gladden; the joy and profit were for her. What delight it gave her to hear of the bravery of her poor boy! Ah! He would have known that, without Hugh's telling him. And what a precious thing it was to know she lived so happily, and heard with so much pride (he pictured to

himself her look when they told her) that he was in such high esteem: bold among the boldest, and trusted before them all. And when these frays were over, and the good lord had conquered his enemies, and they were all at peace again, and he and she were rich, what happiness they would have in talking of these troubled times when he was a great soldier: and when they sat alone together in the tranquil twilight, and she had no longer reason to be anxious for the morrow, what pleasure would he have in the reflection that this was his doing—his—poor

foolish Barnaby's; and in patting her on the cheek, and saying with a merry laugh, "Am I silly now, mother—am I silly now?"

With a lighter heart and step, and eyes the brighter for the happy tear that dimmed them for a moment, Barnaby resumed his walk; and singing gaily to himself, kept guard upon his quiet post.

His comrade Grip, the partner of his watch, though fond of basking in the sunshine, preferred to-day to walk about the stable; having a great deal to do in the way of scattering the



"PUTTING HIS STAFF ACROSS HIS KNEES IN CASE OF ALARM OR SURPRISE, SUMMONED GRIP TO DINNER."

straw, hiding under it such small articles as had been casually left about, and haunting Hugh's bed, to which he seemed to have taken a particular attachment. Sometimes Barnaby looked in and called him, and then he came hopping out; but he merely did this as a concession to his master's weakness, and soon returned again to his own grave pursuits: peering into the straw with his bill, and rapidly covering up the place, as if, Midas-like, he were whispering secrets to the earth, and burying them; constantly busying himself upon the sly; and affecting, whenever Barnaby came past, to look up in

the clouds and have nothing whatever on his mind: in short, conducting himself, in many respects, in a more than usually thoughtful, deep, and mysterious manner.

As the day crept on, Barnaby, who had no directions forbidding him to eat and drink upon his post, but had been, on the contrary, supplied with a bottle of beer and a basket of provisions, determined to break his fast, which he had not done since morning. To this end, he sat down on the ground before the door, and, putting his staff across his knees in case of alarm or surprise, summoned Grip to dinner.



This call the bird obeyed with great alacrity ; crying, as he sidled up to his master, "I'm a devil, I'm a Polly, I'm a kettle, I'm a Protestant, No Popery !" Having learnt this latter sentiment from the gentry among whom he had lived of late, he delivered it with uncommon emphasis.

"Well said, Grip !" cried his master as he fed him with the daintiest bits. "Well said, old boy !"

"Never say die, bow wow wow, keep up your spirits, Grip Grip Grip, Holloa ! We'll all have tea, I'm a Protestant kettle, No Popery !" cried the raven.

"Gordon for ever, Grip !" cried Barnaby.

The raven, placing his head upon the ground, looked at his master sideways, as though he would have said, "Say that again !" Perfectly understanding his desire, Barnaby repeated the phrase a great many times. The bird listened with profound attention ; sometimes repeating the popular cry in a low voice, as if to compare the two, and try if it would at all help him to this new accomplishment ; sometimes flapping his wings or barking ; and sometimes in a kind of desperation drawing a multitude of corks with extraordinary viciousness.

Barnaby was so intent upon his favourite, that he was not at first aware of the approach of two persons on horseback, who were riding at a foot-pace, and coming straight towards his post. When he perceived them, however, which he did when they were within some fifty yards of him, he jumped hastily up, and ordering Grip within doors, stood with both hands on his staff, waiting until he should know whether they were friends or foes.

He had hardly done so when he observed that those who advanced were a gentleman and his servant. Almost at the same moment he recognised Lord George Gordon, before whom he stood uncovered, with his eyes turned towards the ground.

"Good day !" said Lord George, not reining in his horse until he was close beside him. "Well ?"

"All quiet, sir, all safe !" cried Barnaby. "The rest are away—they went by that path—that one. A grand party !"

"Ay ?" said Lord George, looking thoughtfully at him. "And you ?"

"Oh ! They left me here to watch—to mount guard—to keep everything secure till they come back. I'll do it, sir, for your sake. You're a good gentleman ; a kind gentleman—ay, you are. There are many against you, but we'll be a match for them, never fear !"

"What's that ?" said Lord George—pointing to the raven, who was peeping out of the stable door—but still looking thoughtfully, and in some perplexity, it seemed, at Barnaby.

"Why, don't you know ?" retorted Barnaby with a wondering laugh. "Not know what *he* is ! A bird, to be sure. My bird—my friend—Grip."

"A devil, a kettle, a Grip, a Polly, a Protestant, No Popery !" cried the raven.

"Though, indeed," added Barnaby, laying his hand upon the neck of Lord George's horse, and speaking softly : "you had good reason to ask me what he is, for sometimes it puzzles me—and I am used to him—to think he's only a bird. He's my brother, Grip is—always with me—always talking—always merry—eh, Grip ?"

The raven answered by an affectionate croak, and hopping on his master's arm, which he held downward for that purpose, submitted with an air of perfect indifference to be fondled, and turned his restless, curious eye, now upon Lord George, and now upon his man.

Lord George, biting his nails in a discomfited manner, regarded Barnaby for some time in silence ; then, beckoning to his servant, said :

"Come hither, John."

John Grueby touched his hat, and came.

"Have you ever seen this young man before ?" his master asked in a low voice.

"Twice, my lord," said John. "I see him in the crowd last night and Saturday."

"Did—did it seem to you that his manner was at all wild, or strange ?" Lord George demanded, faltering.

"Mad," said John with emphatic brevity.

"And why do you think him mad, sir ?" said his master, speaking in a peevish tone. "Don't use that word too freely. Why do you think him mad ?"

"My lord," John Grueby answered, "look at his dress, look at his eyes, look at his restless way, hear him cry, 'No Popery !' Mad, my lord."

"So because one man dresses unlike another," returned his angry master, glancing at himself, "and happens to differ from other men in his carriage and manner, and to advocate a great cause which the corrupt and irreligious desert, he is to be accounted mad, is he ?"

"Stark, staring, raving, roaring mad, my lord," returned the unmoved John.

"Do you say this to my face ?" cried his master, turning sharply upon him.

"To any man, my lord, who asks me," answered John.

"Mr. Gashford, I find, was right," said Lord George. "I thought him prejudiced, though I

ought to have known a man like him better than to have supposed it possible!"

"I shall never have Mr. Gashford's good word, my lord," replied John, touching his hat respectfully, "and I don't covet it."

"You are an ill-conditioned, most ungrateful fellow," said Lord George: "a spy for anything I know. Mr. Gashford is perfectly correct, as I might have felt convinced he was. I have done wrong to retain you in my service. It is a tacit insult to him as my choice and confidential friend to do so, remembering the cause you sided with on the day he was maligned at Westminster. You will leave me to-night—nay, as soon as we reach home. The sooner the better."

"If it comes to that, I say so too, my lord. Let Mr. Gashford have his will. As to my being a spy, my lord, you know me better than to believe it, I am sure. I don't know much about causes. My cause is the cause of one man against two hundred; and I hope it always will be."

"You have said quite enough," returned Lord George, motioning him to go back. "I desire to hear no more."

"If you'll let me add another word, my lord," returned John Grueby, "I'd give this silly fellow a caution not to stay here by himself. The proclamation is in a good many hands already, and it's well known that he was concerned in the business it relates to. He had better get to a place of safety if he can, poor creature."

"You hear what this man says?" cried Lord George, addressing Barnaby, who had looked on and wondered while this dialogue passed. "He thinks you may be afraid to remain upon your post, and are kept here perhaps against your will. What do you say?"

"I think, young man," said John in explanation, "that the soldiers may turn out and take you; and that if they do, you will certainly be hung by the neck till you're dead—dead—dead—and I think you'd better go from here as fast as you can. That's what I think."

"He's a coward, Grip, a coward!" cried Barnaby, putting the raven on the ground, and shouldering his staff. "Let them come! Let them come! Let them come!"

"Ay!" said Lord George, "let them! Let us see who will venture to attack a power like ours; the solemn league of a whole people. *This* a madman! You have said well, very well. I am proud to be the leader of such men as you."

Barnaby's heart swelled within his bosom as he heard these words. He took Lord George's hand, and carried it to his lips; patted his horse's

crest, as if the affection and admiration he had conceived for the man extended to the animal he rode; then unfurled his flag, and proudly waving it, resumed his pacing up and down.

Lord George, with a kindling eye and glowing cheek, took off his hat, and flourishing it above his head, bade him exultingly Farewell!—then cantered off at a brisk pace; after glancing angrily round to see that his servant followed. Honest John set spurs to his horse, and rode after his master, but not before he had again warned Barnaby to retreat, with many significant gestures, which, indeed, he continued to make, and Barnaby to resist, until the windings of the road concealed them from each other's view.

Left to himself again, with a still higher sense of the importance of his post, and stimulated to enthusiasm by the special notice and encouragement of his leader, Barnaby walked to and fro in a delicious trance rather than as a waking man. The sunshine which prevailed around was in his mind. He had but one desire ungratified. If she could only see him now!

The day wore on; its heat was gently giving place to the cool of evening; a light wind sprung up, fanning his long hair, and making the banner rustle pleasantly above his head. There was a freedom and freshness in the sound and in the time, which chimed exactly with his mood. He was happier than ever.

He was leaning on his staff, looking towards the declining sun, and reflecting with a smile that he stood sentinel at that moment over buried gold, when two or three figures appeared in the distance, making towards the house at a rapid pace, and motioning with their hands as though they urged its inmates to retreat from some approaching danger. As they drew nearer, they became more earnest in their gestures; and they were no sooner within hearing than the foremost among them cried that the soldiers were coming up.

At these words Barnaby furled his flag, and tied it round the pole. His heart beat high while he did so, but he had no more fear or thought of retreating than the pole itself. The friendly stragglers hurried past him, after giving him notice of his danger, and quickly passed into the house, where the utmost confusion immediately prevailed. As those within hastily closed the windows and the doors, they urged him by looks and signs to fly without loss of time, and called to him many times to do so; but he only shook his head indignantly in answer, and stood the firmer on his post. Finding that he was not to be persuaded, they took



care of themselves ; and, leaving the place with only one old woman in it, speedily withdrew.

As yet there had been no symptom of the news having any better foundation than in the fears of those who brought it, but The Boot had not been deserted five minutes, when there appeared, coming across the fields, a body of men who, it was easy to see, by the glitter of their arms and ornaments in the sun, and by their orderly and regular mode of advancing—for they came on as one man—were soldiers. In a very little time Barnaby knew that they were a strong detachment of the Foot Guards, having along with them two gentlemen in private clothes, and a small party of Horse ; the latter brought up the rear, and were not in number more than six or eight.

They advanced steadily ; neither quickening their pace as they came nearer, nor raising any cry, nor showing the least emotion or anxiety. Though this was a matter of course in the case of regular troops, even to Barnaby there was something particularly impressive and disconcerting in it to one accustomed to the noise and tumult of an undisciplined mob. For all that, he stood his ground not a whit the less resolutely, and looked on undismayed.

Presently they marched into the yard, and halted. The commanding officer dispatched a messenger to the horsemen, one of whom came riding back. Some words passed between them, and they glanced at Barnaby ; who well remembered the man he had unhorsed at Westminster, and saw him now before his eyes. The man, being speedily dismissed, saluted, and rode back to his comrades, who were drawn up apart at a short distance.

The officer then gave the word to prime and load. The heavy ringing of the musket-stocks upon the ground, and the sharp and rapid rattling of the ramrods in their barrels, were a kind of relief to Barnaby, deadly though he knew the purport of such sounds to be. When this was done, other commands were given, and the soldiers instantaneously formed in single file all round the house and stables ; completely encircling them in every part, at a distance, perhaps, of some half-dozen yards ; at least, that seemed in Barnaby's eyes to be about the space left between himself and those who confronted him. The horsemen remained drawn up by themselves as before.

The two gentlemen in private clothes, who had kept aloof, now rode forward, one on either side the officer. The proclamation having been produced and read by one of them, the officer called on Barnaby to surrender.

He made no answer, but stepping within the door before which he had kept guard, held his pole crosswise to protect it. In the midst of a profound silence, he was again called upon to yield.

Still he offered no reply. Indeed, he had enough to do to run his eye backward and forward along the half-dozen men who immediately fronted him, and settle hurriedly within himself at which of them he would strike first when they pressed on him. He caught the eye of one in the centre, and resolved to hew that fellow down, though he died for it.

Again there was a dead silence, and again the same voice called upon him to deliver himself up.

Next moment he was back in the stable, dealing blows about him like a madman. Two of the men lay stretched at his feet : the one he had marked dropped first—he had a thought for that, even in the hot blood and hurry of the struggle. Another blow—another ! Down, mastered, wounded in the breast by a heavy blow from the butt-end of a gun (he saw the weapon in the act of falling)—breathless—and a prisoner.

An exclamation of surprise from the officer recalled him, in some degree, to himself. He looked round. Grip, after working in secret all the afternoon, and with redoubled vigour while everybody's attention was distracted, had plucked away the straw from Hugh's bed, and turned up the loose ground with his iron bill. The hole had been recklessly filled to the brim, and was merely sprinkled with earth. Golden cups, spoons, candlesticks, coined guineas—all the riches were revealed.

They brought spades and a sack ; dug up everything that was hidden there ; and carried away more than two men could lift. They handcuffed him and bound his arms, searched him, and took away all he had. Nobody questioned or reproached him, or seemed to have much curiosity about him. The two men he had stunned were carried off by their companions in the same business-like way in which everything else was done. Finally he was left under a guard of four soldiers with fixed bayonets, while the officer directed in person the search of the house and the other buildings connected with it.

This was soon completed. The soldiers formed again in the yard ; he was marched out, with his guard about him ; and ordered to fall in where a space was left. The others closed up all round, and so they moved away, with the prisoner in the centre.

When they came into the streets, he felt he was a sight ; and, looking up as they passed

quickly along, could see people running to the windows a little too late, and throwing up the sashes to look after him. Sometimes he met a staring face beyond the heads above him, or under the arms of his conductors, or peering down upon him from a waggon-top or coach-box; but this was all he saw, being surrounded by so many men. The very noises of the streets seemed muffled and subdued; and the air came stale and hot upon him, like the sickly breath of an oven.

Tramp, tramp. Tramp, tramp. Heads erect, shoulders square, every man stepping in exact time—all so orderly and regular—nobody looking at him—nobody seeming conscious of his presence,—he could hardly believe he was a Prisoner. But at the word, though only thought, not spoken, he felt the handcuffs galling his wrists, the cord pressing his arms to his sides: the loaded guns levelled at his head; and those cold, bright, sharp, shining points turned towards him: the mere looking down at which, now that he was bound and helpless, made the warm current of his life run cold.

#### CHAPTER LVIII.

**T**HEY were not long in reaching the barracks, for the officer who commanded the party was desirous to avoid rousing the people by the display of military force in the streets, and was humanely anxious to give as little opportunity as possible for any attempt at rescue; knowing that it must lead to bloodshed and loss of life, and that, if the civil authorities by whom he was accompanied empowered him to order his men to fire, many innocent persons would probably fall, whom curiosity or idleness had attracted to the spot. He therefore led the party briskly on, avoiding with a merciful prudence the more public and crowded thoroughfares, and pursuing those which he deemed least likely to be infested by disorderly persons. This wise proceeding not only enabled them to gain their quarters without any interruption, but completely baffled a body of rioters who had assembled in one of the main streets, through which it was considered certain they would pass, and who remained gathered together for the purpose of releasing the prisoner from their hands, long after they had deposited him in a place of security, closed the barrack gates, and set a double guard at every entrance for its better protection.

Arrived at this place, poor Barnaby was marched into a stone-floored room, where there was a very powerful smell of tobacco, a strong thorough draught of air, and a great wooden bedstead, large enough for a score of men. Several soldiers in undress were lounging about, or eating from tin cans; military accoutrements dangled on rows of pegs along the whitewashed wall; and some half-dozen men lay fast asleep upon their backs, snoring in concert. After remaining here just long enough to note these things, he was marched out again, and conveyed across the parade-ground to another portion of the building.

Perhaps a man never sees so much at a glance as when he is in a situation of extremity. The chances are a hundred to one, that if Barnaby had lounged in at the gate to look about him, he would have lounged out again with a very imperfect idea of the place, and would have remembered very little about it. But, as he was taken handcuffed across the gravelled area, nothing escaped his notice. The dry, arid look of the dusty square, and of the bare brick building; the clothes hanging at some of the windows; and the men in their shirt-sleeves and braces, lolling with half their bodies out of the others; the green sun-blinds at the officers' quarters, and the little scanty trees in front; the drummer-boys practising in a distant courtyard; the men on drill on the parade; the two soldiers carrying a basket between them, who winked to each other as he went by, and slyly pointed to their throats; the spruce sergeant who hurried past with a cane in his hand, and under his arm a clasped book with a vellum cover; the fellows in the ground-floor rooms, furbishing and brushing up their different articles of dress, who stopped to look at him, and whose voices, as they spoke together, echoed loudly through the empty galleries and passages;—everything, down to the stand of muskets before the guard-house, and the drum with a pipe-clayed belt attached, in one corner, impressed itself upon his observation, as though he had noticed them in the same place a hundred times, or had been a whole day among them, in place of one brief hurried minute.

He was taken into a small paved back-yard, and there they opened a great door, plated with iron, and pierced some five feet above the ground with a few holes to let in air and light. Into this dungeon he was walked straightway; and having locked him up there, and placed a sentry over him, they left him to his meditations.

The cell, or black hole, for it had those words painted on the door, was very dark, and, having recently accommodated a drunken deserter, by no means clean. Barnaby felt his way to some



straw at the farther end, and looking towards the door, tried to accustom himself to the gloom, which, coming from the bright sunshine out of doors, was not an easy task.

There was a kind of portico or colonnade outside, and this obstructed even the little light that at the best could have found its way through the small apertures in the door. The footsteps of the sentinel echoed monotonously as he paced its stone pavement to and fro (reminding Barnaby of the watch he had so lately kept himself); and, as he passed and repassed the door, he made the cell for an instant so black by the interposition of his body, that his going away again seemed like the appearance of a new ray of light, and was quite a circumstance to look for.

When the prisoner had sat some time upon the ground, gazing at the chinks, and listening to the advancing and receding footsteps of his guard, the man stood still upon his post. Barnaby, quite unable to think, or to speculate on what would be done with him, had been lulled into a kind of doze by his regular pace; but his stopping roused him; and then he became aware that two men were in conversation under the colonnade, and very near the door of his cell.

How long they had been talking there he could not tell, for he had fallen into an unconsciousness of his real position, and, when the footsteps ceased, was answering aloud some question which seemed to have been put to him by Hugh in the stable, though of the fancied purport, either of question or reply, notwithstanding that he awoke with the latter on his lips, he had no recollection whatever. The first words that reached his ears were these:

"Why is he brought here, then, if he has to be taken away again so soon?"

"Why, where would you have him go? Damme, he's not as safe anywhere as among the king's troops, is he? What *would* you do with him? Would you hand him over to a pack of cowardly civilians, that shake in their shoes till they wear the soles out, with trembling at the threats of the ragamuffins he belongs to?"

"That's true enough."

"True enough! I'll tell you what. I wish, Tom Green, that I was a commissioned instead of a non-commissioned officer, and that I had the command of two companies—only two companies—of my own regiment. Call me out to stop these riots—give me the needful authority, and half-a-dozen rounds of ball cartridge——"

"Ay!" said the other voice. "That's all very well, but they won't give the needful authority. If the magistrate won't give the word, what's the officer to do?"

Not very well knowing, as it seemed, how to overcome this difficulty, the other man contented himself with damning the magistrates.

"With all my heart," said his friend.

"Where's the use of a magistrate?" returned the other voice. "What's a magistrate in this case, but an impertinent, unnecessary, unconstitutional sort of interference? Here's a proclamation. Here's a man referred to in that proclamation. Here's proof against him, and a witness on the spot. Damme! Take him out and shoot him, sir. Who wants a magistrate?"

"When does he go before Sir John Fielding?" asked the man who had spoken first.

"To-night at eight o'clock," returned the other. "Mark what follows. The magistrate commits him to Newgate. Our people take him to Newgate. The rioters pelt our people. Our people retire before the rioters. Stones are thrown, insults are offered, not a shot's fired. Why? Because of the magistrates. Damn the magistrates!"

When he had in some degree relieved his mind by cursing the magistrates in various other forms of speech, the man was silent, save for a low growling, still having reference to those authorities, which from time to time escaped him.

Barnaby, who had wit enough to know that this conversation concerned, and very nearly concerned, himself, remained perfectly quiet until they ceased to speak, when he groped his way to the door, and peeping through the air-holes, tried to make out what kind of men they were to whom he had been listening.

The one who condemned the civil power in such strong terms was a sergeant—engaged just then, as the streaming ribbons in his cap announced, on the recruiting service. He stood leaning sideways against a pillar nearly opposite the door, and, as he growled to himself, drew figures on the pavement with his cane. The other man had his back towards the dungeon, and Barnaby could only see his form. To judge from that, he was a gallant, manly, handsome fellow, but he had lost his left arm. It had been taken off between the elbow and the shoulder, and his empty coat-sleeve hung across his breast.

It was probably this circumstance which gave him an interest beyond any that his companion could boast of, and attracted Barnaby's attention. There was something soldierly in his bearing, and he wore a jaunty cap and jacket. Perhaps he had been in the service at one time or other. If he had, it could not have been very long ago, for he was but a young fellow now.

"Well, well," he said thoughtfully; "let the fault be where it may, it makes a man sorrowful

to come back to old England, and see her in this condition."

"I suppose the pigs will join 'em next," said the sergeant, with an imprecation on the rioters, "now that the birds have set 'em the example."

"The birds!" repeated Tom Green.

"Ah—birds!" said the sergeant testily; "that's English, an't it?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"Go to the guard-house, and see. You'll find a bird there, that's got their cry as pat as any of 'em, and bawls 'No Popery' like a man—or like a devil, as he says he is. I shouldn't wonder. The devil's loose in London somewhere. Damme if I wouldn't twist his neck round, on the chance, if I had *my* way."

The young man had taken two or three steps away, as if to go and see this creature, when he was arrested by the voice of Barnaby.

"It's mine," he called out, half laughing and half weeping—"my pet, my friend Grip. Ha, ha, ha! Don't hurt him, he has done no harm. I taught him; it's my fault. Let me have him, if you please. He's the only friend I have left now. He'll not dance, or talk, or whistle for you, I know; but he will for me, because he knows me, and loves me—though you wouldn't think it—very well. You wouldn't hurt a bird, I'm sure. You're a brave soldier, sir, and wouldn't harm a woman or a child—no, no, nor a poor bird, I'm certain."

This latter adjuration was addressed to the sergeant, whom Barnaby judged from his red coat to be high in office, and able to seal Grip's destiny by a word. But that gentleman, in reply, surlily damned him for a thief and rebel as he was, and with many disinterested imprecations on his own eyes, liver, blood, and body, assured him that if it rested with him to decide, he would put a final stopper on the bird, and his master too.

"You talk boldly to a caged man," said Barnaby in anger. "If I was on the other side of the door, and there were none to part us, you'd change your note—ay, you may toss your head—you would! Kill the bird—do. Kill anything you can, and so revenge yourself on those who, with their bare hands untied, could do as much to you!"

Having vented his defiance, he flung himself into the furthest corner of his prison, and muttering, "Good-bye, Grip—good-bye, dear old Grip!" shed tears for the first time since he had been taken captive; and hid his face in the straw.

He had had some fancy, at first, that the one-armed man would help him, or would give him

a kind word in answer. He hardly knew why, but he hoped and thought so. The young fellow had stopped when he called out, and checking himself in the very act of turning round, stood listening to every word he said. Perhaps he built his feeble trust on this; perhaps on his being young, and having a frank and honest manner. However that might be, he built on sand. The other went away directly he had finished speaking, and neither answered him nor returned. No matter. They were all against him here; he might have known as much. Good-bye, old Grip, good-bye!

After some time they came and unlocked the door, and called to him to come out. He rose directly, and complied, for he would not have *them* think he was subdued or frightened. He walked out like a man, and looked from face to face.

None of them returned his gaze, or seemed to notice it. They marched him back to the parade by the way they had brought him, and there they halted, among a body of soldiers, at least twice as numerous as that which had taken him prisoner in the afternoon. The officer he had seen before bade him, in a few brief words, take notice that if he attempted to escape, no matter how favourable a chance he might suppose he had, certain of the men had orders to fire upon him that moment. They then closed round him as before, and marched him off again.

In the same unbroken order they arrived at Bow Street, followed and beset on all sides by a crowd which was continually increasing. Here he was placed before a blind gentleman, and asked if he wished to say anything. Not he. What had he got to tell them? After a very little talking, which he was careless of, and quite indifferent to, they told him he was to go to Newgate, and took him away.

He went out into the street, so surrounded and hemmed in on every side by soldiers, that he could see nothing; but he knew there was a great crowd of people by the murmur; and that they were not friendly to the soldiers was soon rendered evident by their yells and hisses. How often and how eagerly he listened for the voice of Hugh! No. There was not a voice he knew among them all. Was Hugh a prisoner too? Was there no hope?

As they came nearer and nearer to the prison, the hootings of the people grew more violent; stones were thrown; and every now and then a rush was made against the soldiers, which they staggered under. One of them, close before him, smarting under a blow upon the temple, levelled his musket, but the officer struck



it upwards with his sword, and ordered him, on peril of his life, to desist. This was the last thing he saw with any distinctness, for directly afterwards he was tossed about, and beaten to and fro, as though in a tempestuous sea. But, go where he would, there were the same guards about him. Twice or thrice he was thrown down, and so were they; but even then he could not elude their vigilance for a moment. They were up again, and had closed about him, before he, with his wrists so tightly bound, could scramble to his feet. Fenced in thus, he felt himself hoisted to the top of a low flight of steps, and then for a moment he caught a glimpse of the fighting in the crowd, and of a few red coats sprinkled together here and there, struggling to rejoin their fellows. Next moment everything was dark and gloomy, and he was standing in the prison lobby; the centre of a group of men.

A smith was speedily in attendance, who riveted upon him a set of heavy irons. Stumbling on as well as he could beneath the unusual burden of these fetters, he was conducted to a strong stone cell, where, fastening the door with locks, and bolts, and chains, they left him, well secured; having first, unseen by him, thrust in Grip, who, with his head drooping and his deep black plumes rough and rumpled, appeared to comprehend and to partake his master's fallen fortunes.

## CHAPTER LIX.

**I**T is necessary at this juncture to return to Hugh, who, having, as we have seen, called to the rioters to disperse from about the Warren, and meet again as usual, glided back into the darkness from which he had emerged, and reappeared no more that night.

He paused in the copse which sheltered him from the observation of his mad companions, and waited to ascertain whether they drew off at his bidding, or still lingered and called to him to join them. Some few, he saw, were indisposed to go away without him, and made towards the spot where he stood concealed, as though they were about to follow in his footsteps, and urge him to come back; but these men, being in their turn called to by their friends, and in truth not greatly caring to venture into the dark parts of the grounds, where they might be easily surprised and taken, if any of the neighbours or retainers of the family were watching them from among the trees, soon abandoned

the idea, and, hastily assembling such men as they found of their mind at the moment, straggled off.

When he was satisfied that the great mass of the insurgents were imitating this example, and that the ground was rapidly clearing, he plunged into the thickest portion of the little wood; and, crashing the branches as he went, made straight towards a distant light: guided by that, and by the sullen glow of the fire behind him.

As he drew nearer and nearer to the twinkling beacon towards which he bent his course, the red glare of a few torches began to reveal itself, and the voices of men speaking together in a subdued tone broke the silence, which, save for a distant shouting now and then, already prevailed. At length he cleared the wood, and, springing across a ditch, stood in a dark lane, where a small body of ill-looking vagabonds, whom he had left there some twenty minutes before, waited his coming with impatience.

They were gathered round an old post-chaise or chariot, driven by one of themselves, who sat postillion-wise upon the near horse. The blinds were drawn up, and Mr. Tappetit and Dennis kept guard at the two windows. The former assumed the command of the party, for he challenged Hugh as he advanced towards them; and when he did so, those who were resting on the ground about the carriage rose to their feet and clustered round him.

"Well!" said Simon in a low voice; "is all right?"

"Right enough," replied Hugh in the same tone. "They're dispersing now—had begun before I came away."

"And is the coast clear?"

"Clear enough before our men, I take it," said Hugh. "There are not many who, knowing of their work over yonder, will want to meddle with 'em to-night.—Who's got some drink here?"

Everybody had some plunder from the cellar; half-a-dozen flasks and bottles were offered directly. He selected the largest, and, putting it to his mouth, sent the wine gurgling down his throat. Having emptied it, he threw it down, and stretched out his hand for another, which he emptied likewise at a draught. Another was given him, and this he half emptied too. Reserving what remained to finish with, he asked:

"Have you got anything to eat, any of you? I'm as ravenous as a hungry wolf. Which of you was in the larder—come?"

"I was, brother," said Dennis, pulling off his hat, and fumbling in the crown. "There's a

matter of cold venison pasty somewhere or another here, if that'll do."

"Do!" cried Hugh, seating himself on the pathway. "Bring it out! Quick! Show a light here, and gather round! Let me sup in state, my lads! Ha, ha, ha!"

Entering into his boisterous humour, for they all had drunk deeply, and were as wild as he, they crowded about him, while two of their number who had torches held them up, one on either side of him, that his banquet might not be dispatched in the dark. Mr. Dennis, having by this time succeeded in extricating from his hat a great mass of pasty, which had been wedged in so tightly that it was not easily got out, put it before him; and Hugh, having borrowed a notched and jagged knife from one of the company, fell to work upon it vigorously.

"I should recommend you to swallow a little fire every day, about an hour afore dinner, brother," said Dennis after a pause. "It seems to agree with you, and to stimulate your appetite."

Hugh looked at him, and at the blackened faces by which he was surrounded, and, stopping for a moment to flourish his knife above his head, answered with a roar of laughter.

"Keep order there, will you?" said Simon Tappertit.

"Why, isn't a man allowed to regale himself, noble captain," retorted his lieutenant, parting the men who stood between them with his knife, that he might see him,—to regale himself a little bit, after such work as mine? What a hard captain! What a strict captain! What a tyrannical captain! Ha, ha, ha!"

"I wish one of you fellers would hold a bottle to his mouth to keep him quiet," said Simon, "unless you want the military to be down upon us."

"And what if they are down upon us?" retorted Hugh. "Who cares? Who's afraid? Let 'em come, I say, let 'em come. The more the merrier. Give me bold Barnaby at my side, and we two will settle the military, without troubling any of you. Barnaby's the man for the military. Barnaby's health!"

But as the majority of those present were by no means anxious for a second engagement that night, being already weary and exhausted, they sided with Mr. Tappertit, and pressed him to make haste with his supper, for they had already delayed too long. Knowing, even in the height of his frenzy, that they incurred great danger by lingering so near the scene of the late outrages, Hugh made an end of his meal without more remonstrance, and rising, stepped up to Mr. Tappertit, and smote him on the back.

"Now then," he cried, "I'm ready. There are brave birds inside this cage, eh? Delicate birds,—tender, loving little doves. I caged 'em—I caged 'em—one more peep!"

He thrust the little man aside as he spoke, and mounting on the steps, which were half let down, pulled down the blind by force, and stared into the chaise like an ogre into his larder.

"Ha, ha, ha! and did you scratch, and pinch, and struggle, pretty mistress?" he cried, as he grasped a little hand that sought in vain to free itself from his grip: "you, so bright-eyed, and cherry-lipped, and daintily made? But I love you better for it, mistress. Ay, I do. You should stab me and welcome, so that it pleased you, and you had to cure me afterwards. I love to see you proud and scornful. It makes you handsomer than ever; and who so handsome as you at any time, my pretty one?"

"Come!" said Mr. Tappertit, who had waited during this speech with considerable impatience. "There's enough of that. Come down."

The little hand seconded this admonition by thrusting Hugh's great head away with all its force, and drawing up the blind, amidst his noisy laughter, and vows that he must have another look, for the last glimpse of that sweet face had provoked him past all bearing. However, as the suppressed impatience of the party now broke out into open murmurs, he abandoned this design, and taking his seat upon the bar, contented himself with tapping at the front windows of the carriage, and trying to steal a glance inside; Mr. Tappertit, mounting the steps and hanging on by the door, issued his directions to the driver with a commanding voice and attitude; the rest got up behind, or ran by the side of the carriage, as they could; some, in imitation of Hugh, endeavoured to see the face he had praised so highly, and were reminded of their impertinence by hints from the cudgel of Mr. Tappertit. Thus they pursued their journey by circuitous and winding roads; preserving, except when they halted to take breath, or to quarrel about the best way of reaching London, pretty good order and tolerable silence.

In the meantime Dolly—beautiful, bewitching, captivating little Dolly—her hair dishevelled, her dress torn, her dark eyelashes wet with tears, her bosom heaving—her face, now pale with fear, now crimsoned with indignation—her whole self a hundred times more beautiful in this heightened aspect than ever she had been before—vainly strove to comfort Emma Hare-dale, and to impart to her the consolation of which she stood in so much need herself. The soldiers were sure to come; they must be rescued;



it would be impossible to convey them through the streets of London when they set the threats of their guards at defiance, and shrieked to the passengers for help. If they did this when they came into the more frequented ways, she was certain—she was quite certain—they must be released. So poor Dolly said, and so poor Dolly tried to think; but the invariable conclusion of all such arguments was, that Dolly burst into tears; cried, as she wrung her hands, what would they do or think, or who would comfort them at home, at the Golden Key? and sobbed most piteously.

Miss Haredale, whose feelings were usually of a quieter kind than Dolly's, and not so much upon the surface, was dreadfully alarmed, and, indeed, had only just recovered from a swoon. She was very pale, and the hand which Dolly held was quite cold; but she bade her, nevertheless, remember that, under Providence, much must depend upon their own discretion; that if they remained quiet, and lulled the vigilance of the ruffians into whose hands they had fallen, the chances of their being able to procure assistance when they reached the town were very much increased; that unless society were quite unhinged, a hot pursuit must be immediately commenced; and that her uncle, she might be sure, would never rest until he had found them out and rescued them. But, as she said these latter words, the idea that he had fallen in a general massacre of the Catholics that night—no very wild or improbable supposition, after what they had seen and undergone—struck her dumb; and, lost in the horrors they had witnessed, and those they might be yet reserved for, she sat, incapable of thought or speech or outward show of grief: as rigid, and almost as white and cold, as marble.

Oh, how many, many times, in that long ride, did Dolly think of her old lover—poor, fond, slighted Joe! How many, many times did she recall that night when she ran into his arms from the very man now projecting his hateful gaze into the darkness where she sat, and leering through the glass, in monstrous admiration! And when she thought of Joe, and what a brave fellow he was, and how he would have rode boldly up, and dashed in among these villains now, yes, though they were double the number—and here she clenched her little hand, and pressed her foot upon the ground—the pride she felt for a moment in having won his heart faded in a burst of tears, and she sobbed more bitterly than ever.

As the night wore on, and they proceeded by ways which were quite unknown to them—for

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they could recognise none of the objects of which they sometimes caught a hurried glimpse—their fears increased; nor were they without good foundation: it was not difficult for two beautiful young women to find, in their being borne they knew not whither, by a band of daring villains who eyed them as some among these fellows did, reasons for the worst alarm. When they at last entered London by a suburb with which they were wholly unacquainted, it was past midnight, and the streets were dark and empty. Nor was this the worst, for the carriage stopping in a lonely spot, Hugh suddenly opened the door, jumped in, and took his seat between them.

It was in vain they cried for help. He put his arm about the neck of each, and swore to stifle them with kisses if they were not as silent as the grave.

"I come here to keep you quiet," he said, "and that's the means I shall take. So don't be quiet, pretty mistresses—make a noise—do—and I shall like it all the better."

They were proceeding at a rapid pace, and apparently with fewer attendants than before, though it was so dark (the torches being extinguished) that this was mere conjecture. They shrunk from his touch, each into the farthest corner of the carriage; but shrink as Dolly would, his arm encircled her waist, and held her fast. She neither cried nor spoke, for terror and disgust deprived her of the power; but she plucked at his hand as though she would die in the effort to disengage herself; and crouching on the ground, with her head averted and held down, repelled him with a strength she wondered at as much as he. The carriage stopped again.

"Lift this one out," said Hugh to the man who opened the door, as he took Miss Haredale's hand, and felt how heavily it fell. "She's fainted."

"So much the better," growled Dennis—it was that amiable gentleman. "She's quiet. I always like 'em to faint, unless they're very tender and composed."

"Can you take her by yourself?" asked Hugh.

"I don't know till I try. I ought to be able to; I've lifted up a good many in my time," said the hangman. "Up, then! She's no small weight, brother; none of these here fine gals are. Up again! Now we have her."

Having by this time hoisted the young lady into his arms, he staggered off with his burden.

"Look ye, pretty bird," said Hugh, drawing Dolly towards him. "Remember what I told

you—a kiss for every cry. Scream if you love me, darling. Scream once, mistress. Pretty mistress, only once, if you love me.”

Thrusting his face away with all her force, and holding down her head, Dolly submitted to be carried out of the chaise, and borne after Miss Haredale into a miserable cottage, where Hugh, after hugging her to his breast, set her gently down upon the floor.

Poor Dolly! do what she would, she only looked the better for it, and tempted them the more. When her eyes flashed angrily, and her ripe lips slightly parted to give her rapid breathing vent, who could resist it? When she wept and sobbed as though her heart would break, and bemoaned her miseries in the sweetest voice that ever fell upon a listener's ear, who could be insensible to the little winning pettishness which now and then displayed itself even in the sincerity and earnestness of her grief? When, forgetful for a moment of herself, as she was now, she fell on her knees beside her friend, and bent over her, and laid her cheek to hers, and put her arms about her, what mortal eyes could have avoided wandering to the delicate bodice, the streaming hair, the neglected dress, the perfect abandonment and unconsciousness of the blooming little beauty? Who could look on and see her lavish caresses and endearments, and not desire to be in Emma Haredale's place; to be either her or Dolly; either the hugging or the hugged? Not Hugh. Not Dennis.

“I tell you what it is, young women,” said Mr. Dennis, “I an't much of a lady's man myself, nor am I a party in the present business further than lending a willing hand to my friends: but, if I see much more of this here sort of thing, I shall become a principal instead of a accessory. I tell you candid.”

“Why have you brought us here?” said Emma. “Are we to be murdered?”

“Murdered!” cried Dennis, sitting down upon a stool, and regarding her with great favour. “Why, my dear, who'd murder sich chickabiddies as you? If you was to ask me, now, whether you was brought here to be married, there might be something in it.”

And here he exchanged a grin with Hugh, who removed his eyes from Dolly for the purpose.

“No, no,” said Dennis, “there'll be no murdering, my pets. Nothing of that sort. Quite the contrary.”

“You are an older man than your companion, sir,” said Emma, trembling. “Have you no pity for us? Do you not consider that we are women?”

“I do indeed, my dear,” retorted Dennis. “It would be very hard not to, with two such specimens afore my eyes. Ha, ha! Oh yes, I consider that. We all consider that, miss.”

He shook his head waggishly, leered at Hugh again, and laughed very much, as if he had said a noble thing, and rather thought he was coming out.

“There'll be no murdering, my dear. Not a bit on it. I tell you what though, brother,” said Dennis, cocking his hat for the convenience of scratching his head, and looking gravely at Hugh; “it's worthy of notice, as a proof of the amazing equalness and dignity of our law, that it don't make no distinction between men and women. I've heerd the judge say sometimes, to a highwayman or housebreaker as had tied the ladies neck and heels—you'll excuse me making mention of it, my darlings—and put 'em in a cellar, that he showed no consideration to women. Now, I say that there judge didn't know his business, brother; and that, if I had been that there highwayman or housebreaker, I should have made answer: ‘What are you a talking of, my lord? I showed the women as much consideration as the law does, and what more would you have me do?’ If you was to count up in the newspapers the number of females as have been worked off, in this here city alone, in the last ten year,” said Mr. Dennis thoughtfully, “you'd be surprised at the total—quite amazed, you would. There's a dignified and equal thing; a beautiful thing! But we've no security for its lasting. Now that they've begun to favour these here Papists, I shouldn't wonder if they went and altered even *that*, one of these days. Upon my soul, I shouldn't.”

This subject, perhaps from being of too exclusive and professional a nature, failed to interest Hugh as much as his friend had anticipated. But he had no time to pursue it, for, at this crisis, Mr. Tappertit entered precipitately; at sight of whom Dolly uttered a scream of joy, and fairly threw herself into his arms.

“I knew it, I was sure of it!” cried Dolly. “My dear father's at the door. Thank God, thank God! Bless you, Sim! Heaven bless you for this!”

Simon Tappertit, who had at first implicitly believed that the locksmith's daughter, unable any longer to suppress her secret passion for himself, was about to give it full vent in its intensity, and to declare that she was his for ever, looked extremely foolish when she said these words;—the more so as they were received by Hugh and Dennis with a loud laugh, which



made her draw back, and regard them with a fixed and earnest look.

"Miss Haredale," said Sim after a very awkward silence, "I hope you're as comfortable as circumstances will permit of. Dolly Varden, my darling—my own, my lovely one—I hope *you're* pretty comfortable likewise."

Poor little Dolly! She saw how it was; hid her face in her hands; and sobbed more bitterly than ever.

"You meet in me, Miss V.," said Simon, laying his hand upon his breast, "not a 'prentice, not a workman, not a slave, not the victim of your father's tyrannical behaviour, but the leader of a great people, the captain of a noble band, in which these gentlemen are, as I may say, corporals and sergeants. You behold in me, not a private individual, but a public character; not a mender of locks, but a healer of the wounds of his unhappy country. Dolly V., sweet Dolly V., for how many years have I looked forward to this present meeting! For how many years has it been my intention to exalt and ennoble you! I redeem it. Behold in me your husband. Yes, beautiful Dolly—charmer—enslaver—S. Tappertit is all your own!"

As he said these words he advanced towards her. Dolly retreated till she could go no farther, and then sank down upon the floor. Thinking it very possible that this might be maiden modesty, Simon essayed to raise her; on which Dolly, goaded to desperation, wound her hands in his hair, and crying out amidst her tears that he was a dreadful little wretch, and always had been, shook, and pulled, and beat him until he was fain to call for help most lustily. Hugh had never admired her half so much as at that moment.

"She's in an excited state to-night," said Simon as he smoothed his rumpled feathers, "and don't know when she's well off. Let her be by herself till to-morrow, and that'll bring her down a little. Carry her into the next house!"

Hugh had her in his arms directly. It might be that Mr. Tappertit's heart was really softened by her distress, or it might be that he felt it in some degree indecorous that his intended bride should be struggling in the grasp of another man. He commanded him, on second thoughts, to put her down again, and looked moodily on as she flew to Miss Haredale's side, and, clinging to her dress, hid her flushed face in its folds.

"They shall remain here together till to-morrow," said Simon, who had now quite re-

covered his dignity—"till to-morrow. Come away!"

"Ay!" cried Hugh. "Come away, captain. Ha, ha, ha!"

"What are you laughing at?" demanded Simon sternly.

"Nothing, captain, nothing," Hugh rejoined; and as he spoke, and clapped his hand upon the shoulder of the little man, he laughed again, for some unknown reason, with tenfold violence.

Mr. Tappertit surveyed him from head to foot with lofty scorn (this only made him laugh the more), and, turning to the prisoners, said:

"You'll take notice, ladies, that this place is well watched on every side, and that the least noise is certain to be attended with unpleasant consequences. You'll hear—both of you—more of our intentions to-morrow. In the meantime don't show yourselves at the window, or appeal to any of the people you may see pass it; for if you do, it'll be known directly that you come from a Catholic house, and all the exertions our men can make may not be able to save your lives."

With this last caution, which was true enough, he turned to the door, followed by Hugh and Dennis. They paused for a moment, going out, to look at them clasped in each other's arms, and then left the cottage; fastening the door, and setting a good watch upon it, and, indeed, all round the house.

"I say," growled Dennis as they walked away in company, "that's a dainty pair. Muster Gashford's one is as handsome as the other, eh?"

"Hush!" said Hugh hastily. "Don't you mention names. It's a bad habit."

"I wouldn't like to be *him*, then (as you don't like names), when he breaks it out to her; that's all," said Dennis. "She's one of them fine, black-eyed, proud gals, as I wouldn't trust at such times with a knife too near 'em. I've seen some of that sort afore now. I recollect one that was worked off many year ago—and there was a gentleman in that case too—that says to me, with her lip a trembling, but her hand as steady as ever I see one: 'Dennis, I'm near my end, but if I had a dagger in these fingers, and he was within my reach, I'd strike him dead afore me;—ah, she did—and she'd have done it too!'"

"Strike who dead?" demanded Hugh.

"How should I know, brother?" answered Dennis. "*She* never said; not she."

Hugh looked, for a moment, as though he would have made some further inquiry into this incoherent recollection; but Simon Tappertit,

who had been meditating deeply, gave his thoughts a new direction.

"Hugh!" said Sim. "You have done well to-day. You shall be rewarded. So have you, Dennis.—There's no young woman *you* want to carry off, is there?"

"N—no," returned that gentleman, stroking his grizzled beard, which was some two inches long. "None in partickler, I think."

"Very good," said Sim; "then we'll find

some other way of making it up to you. As to you, old boy"—he turned to Hugh—"you shall have Miggs (her that I promised you, you know) within three days. Mind. I pass my word for it."

Hugh thanked him heartily; and, as he did so, his laughing fit returned with such violence that he was obliged to hold his side with one hand, and to lean with the other on the shoulder of his small captain, without whose support he would certainly have rolled upon the ground.



"LOOKED MOODILY ON AS SHE FLEW TO MISS HAREDALE'S SIDE."

#### CHAPTER LX.

**T**HE three worthies turned their faces towards The Boot, with the intention of passing the night in that place of rendezvous, and of seeking the repose they so much needed in the shelter of their old den; for now that the mischief and destruction they had purposed were achieved, and their prisoners were safely bestowed for the night, they began to be conscious of exhaustion, and to feel the

wasting effects of the madness which had led to such deplorable results.

Notwithstanding the lassitude and fatigue which oppressed him now, in common with his two companions, and, indeed, with all who had taken an active share in that night's work, Hugh's boisterous merriment broke out afresh whenever he looked at Simon Tappertit, and vented itself—much to that gentleman's indignation—in such shouts of laughter as bade fair to bring the watch upon them, and involve them in a skirmish, to which, in their present worn-



out condition, they might prove by no means equal. Even Mr. Dennis, who was not at all particular on the score of gravity or dignity, and who had a great relish for his young friend's eccentric humours, took occasion to remonstrate with him on this imprudent behaviour, which he held to be a species of suicide, tantamount to a man's working himself off without being overtaken by the law, than which he could imagine nothing more ridiculous or impertinent.

Not abating one jot of his noisy mirth for these remonstrances, Hugh reeled along between them, having an arm of each, until they hove in sight of *The Boot*, and were within a field or two of that convenient tavern. He happened by great good luck to have roared and shouted himself into silence by this time. They were proceeding onward without noise, when a scout who had been creeping about the ditches all night, to warn any stragglers from encroaching further on what was now such dangerous ground, peeped cautiously from his hiding-place, and called to them to stop.

"Stop! and why?" said Hugh.

Because (the scout replied) the house was filled with constables and soldiers; having been surprised that afternoon. The inmates had fled, or been taken into custody, he could not say which. He had prevented a great many people from approaching nearer, and he believed they had gone to the markets and such places to pass the night. He had seen the distant fires, but they were all out now. He had heard the people who passed and repassed speaking of them too, and could report that the prevailing opinion was one of apprehension and dismay. He had not heard a word of Barnaby—didn't even know his name—but it had been said in his hearing that some man had been taken and carried off to *Newgate*. Whether this was true or false he could not affirm.

The three took counsel together on hearing this, and debated what it might be best to do. Hugh, deeming it possible that Barnaby was in the hands of the soldiers, and at that moment under detention at *The Boot*, was for advancing stealthily, and firing the house; but his companions, who objected to such rash measures unless they had a crowd at their backs, represented that if Barnaby were taken he had assuredly been removed to a stronger prison; they would never have dreamed, they said, of keeping him all night in a place so weak and open to attack. Yielding to this reasoning, and to their persuasions, Hugh consented to turn back, and to repair to *Fleet Market*; for which place, it seemed, a few of their boldest associates

had shaped their course on receiving the same intelligence.

Feeling their strength recruited and their spirits roused, now that there was a new necessity for action, they hurried away, quite forgetful of the fatigue under which they had been sinking but a few minutes before; and soon arrived at their place of destination.

*Fleet Market*, at that time, was a long, irregular row of wooden sheds and pent-houses, occupying the centre of what is now called *Farringdon Street*. They were jumbled together in a most unsightly fashion in the middle of the road; to the great obstruction of the thoroughfare and the annoyance of passengers, who were fain to make their way as they best could among carts, baskets, barrows, trucks, casks, bulks, and benches, and to jostle with porters, hucksters, waggoners, and a motley crowd of buyers, sellers, pickpockets, vagrants, and idlers. The air was perfumed with the stench of rotten leaves and faded fruit, the refuse of the butchers' stalls, and offal and garbage of a hundred kinds. It was indispensable to most public conveniences in those days that they should be public nuisances likewise; and *Fleet Market* maintained the principle to admiration.

To this place, perhaps because its sheds and baskets were a tolerable substitute for beds, or perhaps because it afforded the means of a hasty barricade in case of need, many of the rioters had straggled not only that night, but for two or three nights before. It was now broad day, but the morning being cold, a group of them were gathered round a fire in a public-house, drinking hot purl, and smoking pipes, and planning new schemes for to-morrow.

Hugh and his two friends, being known to most of these men, were received with signal marks of approbation, and inducted into the most honourable seats. The room-door was closed and fastened to keep intruders at a distance, and then they proceeded to exchange news.

"The soldiers have taken possession of *The Boot*, I hear," said Hugh. "Who knows anything about it?"

Several cried that they did; but the majority of the company having been engaged in the assault upon the *Warren*, and all present having been concerned in one or other of the night's expeditions, it proved that they knew no more than Hugh himself; having been merely warned by each other, or by the scout, and knowing nothing of their own knowledge.

"We left a man on guard there to-day," said Hugh, looking round him, "who is not here.

You know who it is—Barnaby, who brought the soldier down at Westminster. Has any man seen or heard of him?"

They shook their heads, and murmured an answer in the negative, as each man looked round and appealed to his fellow; when a noise was heard without, and a man was heard to say that he wanted Hugh—that he must see Hugh.

"He is but one man," cried Hugh to those who kept the door; "let him come in."

"Ay, ay!" muttered the others. "Let him come in. Let him come in."

The door was accordingly unlocked and opened. A one-armed man, with his head and face tied up with a bloody cloth as though he had been severely beaten, his clothes torn, and his remaining hand grasping a thick stick, rushed in among them, and panting for breath, demanded which was Hugh.

"Here he is," replied the person he inquired for. "I am Hugh. What do you want with me?"

"I have a message for you," said the man. "You know one Barnaby."

"What of him? Did he send the message?"

"Yes. He's taken. He's in one of the strong cells in Newgate. He defended himself as well as he could, but was overpowered by numbers. That's his message."

"When did you see him?" asked Hugh hastily.

"On his way to prison, where he was taken by a party of soldiers. They took a by-road, and not the one we expected. I was one of the few who tried to rescue him, and he called to me, and told me to tell Hugh where he was. We made a good struggle, though it failed. Look here!"

He pointed to his dress and to his bandaged head, and still panting for breath, glanced round the room; then faced towards Hugh again.

"I know you by sight," he said, "for I was in the crowd on Friday, and on Saturday, and yesterday, but I didn't know your name. You're a bold fellow, I know. So is he. He fought like a lion to-night, but it was of no use. I did my best, considering that I want this limb."

Again he glanced inquisitively round the room—or seemed to do so, for his face was nearly hidden by the bandage—and again facing sharply towards Hugh, grasped his stick as if he half expected to be set upon, and stood on the defensive.

If he had any such apprehension, however, he was speedily reassured by the demeanour of all present. None thought of the bearer of the tidings. He was lost in the news he brought. Oaths, threats, and execrations were vented on all sides. Some cried that if they bore this

tamely, another day would see them all in gaol; some, that they should have rescued the other prisoners, and this would not have happened. One man cried in a loud voice, "Who'll follow me to Newgate?" and there was a loud shout and a general rush towards the door.

But Hugh and Dennis stood with their backs against it, and kept them back, until the clamour had so far subsided that their voices could be heard, when they called to them together that to go now, in broad day, would be madness; and that if they waited until night, and arranged a plan of attack, they might release, not only their own companions, but all the prisoners, and burn down the gaol.

"Not that gaol alone," cried Hugh, "but every gaol in London. They shall have no place to put their prisoners in. We'll burn them all down; make bonfires of them every one! Here!" he cried, catching at the hangman's hand. "Let all who're men here join with us. Shake hands upon it. Barnaby out of gaol, and not a gaol left standing! Who joins?"

Every man there. And they swore a great oath to release their friends from Newgate next night; to force the doors and burn the gaol; or perish in the fire themselves.

## CHAPTER LXI.



ON that same night—events so crowd upon each other in convulsed and distracted times, that more than the stirring incidents of a whole life often become compressed into the compass of four-and-twenty hours—on that same night, Mr. Haredale, having strongly bound his prisoner, with the assistance of the sexton, and forced him to mount his horse, conducted him to Chigwell; bent upon procuring a conveyance to London from that place, and carrying him at once before a Justice. The disturbed state of the town would be, he knew, a sufficient reason for demanding the murderer's committal to prison before daybreak, as no man could answer for the security of any of the watch-houses or ordinary places of detention; and to convey a prisoner through the streets when the mob were again abroad would not only be a task of great danger and hazard, but would be to challenge an attempt at rescue. Directing the sexton to lead the horse, he walked close by the murderer's side, and in this order they reached the village about the middle of the night.



The people were all awake and up, for they were fearful of being burnt in their beds, and sought to comfort and assure each other by watching in company. A few of the stoutest-hearted were armed and gathered in a body on the green. To these, who knew him well, Mr. Haredale addressed himself, briefly narrating what had happened, and beseeching them to aid in conveying the criminal to London before the dawn of day.

But not a man among them dared to help him by so much as the motion of a finger. The rioters, in their passage through the village, had menaced with their fiercest vengeance any person who should aid in extinguishing the fire, or render the least assistance to him, or any Catholic whomsoever. Their threats extended to their lives and all that they possessed. They were assembled for their own protection, and could not endanger themselves by lending any aid to him. This they told him, not without hesitation and regret, as they kept aloof in the moonlight, and glanced fearfully at the ghostly rider, who, with his head drooping on his breast and his hat slouched down upon his brow, neither moved nor spoke.

Finding it impossible to persuade them, and, indeed, hardly knowing how to do so after what they had seen of the fury of the crowd, Mr. Haredale besought them that at least they would leave him free to act for himself, and would suffer him to take the only chaise and pair of horses that the place afforded. This was not acceded to without some difficulty, but in the end they told him to do what he would, and go away from them in Heaven's name.

Leaving the sexton at the horse's bridle, he drew out the chaise with his own hands, and would have harnessed the horses, but that the postboy of the village—a soft-hearted, good-for-nothing, vagabond kind of fellow—was moved by his earnestness and passion, and, throwing down a pitchfork with which he was armed, swore that the rioters might cut him into mince-meat if they liked, but he would not stand by and see an honest gentleman, who had done no wrong, reduced to such extremity, without doing what he could to help him. Mr. Haredale shook him warmly by the hand, and thanked him from his heart. In five minutes' time the chaise was ready, and this good scapegrace in his saddle. The murderer was put inside, the blinds were drawn up, the sexton took his seat upon the bar, Mr. Haredale mounted his horse, and rode close beside the door; and so they started in the dead of night, and in profound silence, for London.

The consternation was so extreme that even

the horses which had escaped the flames at the Warren could find no friends to shelter them. They passed them on the road, browsing on the stunted grass; and the driver told them that the poor beasts had wandered to the village first, but had been driven away, lest they should bring the vengeance of the crowd on any of the inhabitants.

Nor was this feeling confined to such small places, where the people were timid, ignorant, and unprotected. When they came near London they met, in the grey light of morning, more than one poor Catholic family who, terrified by the threats and warnings of their neighbours, were quitting the city on foot, and who told them they could hire no cart or horse for the removal of their goods, and had been compelled to leave them behind, at the mercy of the crowd. Near Mile-end they passed a house, the master of which, a Catholic gentleman of small means, having hired a waggon to remove his furniture by midnight, had had it all brought down into the street to wait the vehicle's arrival, and save time in the packing. But the man with whom he made the bargain, alarmed by the fires that night, and by the sight of the rioters passing his door, had refused to keep it: and the poor gentleman, with his wife and servant and their little children, were sitting trembling among their goods in the open street, dreading the arrival of day, and not knowing where to turn or what to do.

It was the same, they heard, with the public conveyances. The panic was so great that the mails and stage-coaches were afraid to carry passengers who professed the obnoxious religion. If the drivers knew them, or they admitted that they held that creed, they would not take them, no, though they offered large sums; and yesterday people had been afraid to recognise Catholic acquaintance in the streets, lest they should be marked by spies, and burnt out, as it was called, in consequence. One mild old man—a priest, whose chapel was destroyed; a very feeble, patient, inoffensive creature—who was trudging away alone, designing to walk some distance from town, and then try his fortune with the coaches, told Mr. Haredale that he feared he might not find a magistrate who would have the hardihood to commit a prisoner to gaol on his complaint. But, notwithstanding these discouraging accounts, they went on, and reached the Mansion House soon after sunrise.

Mr. Haredale threw himself from his horse, but he had no need to knock at the door, for it was already open, and there stood upon the step a portly old man, with a very red, or rather

purple face, who, with an anxious expression of countenance, was remonstrating with some unseen person up-stairs, while the porter essayed to close the door by degrees and get rid of him. With the intense impatience and excitement natural to one in his condition, Mr. Haredale thrust himself forward, and was about to speak, when the fat old gentleman interposed.

"My good sir," said he, "pray let me get an answer. This is the sixth time I have been here. I was here five times yesterday. My house is threatened with destruction. It is to be burned down to-night, and was to have been last night, but they had other business on their hands. Pray let me get an answer."

"My good sir," returned Mr. Haredale, shaking his head, "my house is burned to the ground. But Heaven forbid that yours should be. Get your answer. Be brief, in mercy to me."

"Now, you hear this, my lord?" said the old gentleman, calling up the stairs to where the skirt of a dressing-gown fluttered on the landing-place. "Here is a gentleman here whose house was actually burnt down last night."

"Dear me, dear me," replied a testy voice, "I am very sorry for it, but what am I to do? I can't build it up again. The chief magistrate of the City can't go and be a rebuilding of people's houses, my good sir. Stuff and nonsense!"

"But the chief magistrate of the City can prevent people's houses from having any need to be rebuilt, if the chief magistrate's a man, and not a dummy—can't he, my lord?" cried the old gentleman in a choleric manner.

"You are disrespectful, sir," said the Lord Mayor—"leastways, disrespectful I mean."

"Disrespectful, my lord!" returned the old gentleman. "I was respectful five times yesterday. I can't be respectful for ever. Men can't stand on being respectful when their houses are going to be burnt over their heads, with them in 'em. What am I to do, my lord? Am I to have any protection?"

"I told you yesterday, sir," said the Lord Mayor, "that you might have an alderman in your house, if you could get one to come."

"What the devil's the good of an alderman?" returned the choleric old gentleman.

"—To awe the crowd, sir," said the Lord Mayor.

"Oh Lord ha' mercy!" whimpered the old gentleman, as he wiped his forehead in a state of ludicrous distress, "to think of sending an alderman to awe a crowd! Why, my lord, if they were even so many babies, fed on mother's

milk, what do you think they'd care for an alderman? Will *you* come?"

"I!" said the Lord Mayor most emphatically. "Certainly not."

"Then what," returned the old gentleman, "what am I to do? Am I a citizen of England? Am I to have the benefit of the laws? Am I to have any return for the King's taxes?"

"I don't know, I am sure," said the Lord Mayor. "What a pity it is you're a Catholic! Why couldn't you be a Protestant, and then you wouldn't have got yourself into such a mess? I'm sure I don't know what's to be done.—There are great people at the bottom of these riots.—Oh dear me, what a thing it is to be a public character!—You must look in again in the course of the day.—Would a javelin-man do?—Or there's Philips the constable—*he's* disengaged,—he's not very old for a man at his time of life, except in his legs, and if you put him up at a window he'd look quite young by candle-light, and might frighten 'em very much.—Oh dear!—well,—we'll see about it."

"Stop!" cried Mr. Haredale, pressing the door open as the porter strove to shut it, and speaking rapidly. "My Lord Mayor, I beg you not to go away. I have a man here, who committed a murder eight-and-twenty years ago. Half-a-dozen words from me, on oath, will justify you in committing him to prison for re-examination. I only seek, just now, to have him consigned to a place of safety. The least delay may involve his being rescued by the rioters."

"Oh dear me!" cried the Lord Mayor. "God bless my soul—and body—oh Lor!—well I!—there are great people at the bottom of these riots, you know.—You really mustn't."

"My lord," said Mr. Haredale, "the murdered gentleman was my brother; I succeeded to his inheritance; there were not wanting slanderous tongues, at that time, to whisper that the guilt of this most foul and cruel deed was mine—mine, who loved him, as he knows, in Heaven, dearly. The time has come, after all these years of gloom and misery, for avenging him, and bringing to light a crime so artful and so devilish that it has no parallel. Every second's delay on your part loosens this man's bloody hands again, and leads to his escape. My lord, I charge you hear me, and dispatch this matter on the instant."

"Oh dear me!" cried the chief magistrate; "these an't business hours, you know—I wonder at you—how ungentlemanly it is of you—you mustn't—you really mustn't.—And I suppose *you* are a Catholic too?"

"I am," said Mr. Haredale.



"God bless my soul, I believe people turn Catholics a purpose to vex and worrit me," cried the Lord Mayor. "I wish you wouldn't come here; they'll be setting the Mansion House afire next, and we shall have you to

thank for it. You must lock your prisoner up, sir—give him to a watchman—and—and call again at a proper time. Then we'll see about it!"

Before Mr. Haredale could answer, the sharp



"WILL YOU COME?"

"I!" SAID THE LORD MAYOR MOST EMPHATICALLY. "CERTAINLY NOT."

closing of a door, and drawing of its bolts, gave notice that the Lord Mayor had retreated to his bedroom, and that further remonstrance would be unavailing. The two clients retreated likewise, and the porter shut them out into the street.

"That's the way he puts me off," said the old gentleman. "I can get no redress and no help. What are you going to do, sir?"

"To try elsewhere," answered Mr. Haredale, who was by this time on horseback.

"I feel for you, I assure you—and well I

may, for we are in a common cause," said the old gentleman. "I may not have a house to offer you to-night; let me tender it while I can. On second thoughts, though," he added, putting up a pocket-book he had produced while speaking, "I'll not give you a card, for if it was found upon you, it might get you into trouble. Langdale—that's my name—vintner and distiller—Holborn Hill—you're heartily welcome, if you'll come."

Mr. Haredale bowed, and rode off, close beside the chaise, as before; determining to repair to the house of Sir John Fielding, who had the reputation of being a bold and active magistrate, and fully resolved, in case the rioters should come upon them, to do execution on the murderer with his own hands, rather than suffer him to be released.

They arrived at the magistrate's dwelling, however, without molestation (for the mob, as we have seen, were then intent on deeper schemes), and knocked at the door. As it had been pretty generally rumoured that Sir John was proscribed by the rioters, a body of thief-takers had been keeping watch in the house all night. To one of them Mr. Haredale stated his business, which, appearing to the man of sufficient moment to warrant his arousing the justice, procured him an immediate audience.

No time was lost in committing the murderer to Newgate; then a new building, recently completed at a vast expense, and considered to be of enormous strength. The warrant being made out, three of the thief-takers bound him afresh (he had been struggling, it seemed, in the chaise, and had loosened his manacles); gagged him, lest they should meet with any of the mob, and he should call to them for help; and seated themselves along with him in the carriage. These men, being all well armed, made a formidable escort; but they drew up the blinds again, as though the carriage were empty, and directed Mr. Haredale to ride forward, that he might not attract attention by seeming to belong to it.

The wisdom of this proceeding was sufficiently obvious, for, as they hurried through the City, they passed among several groups of men who, if they had not supposed the chaise to be quite empty, would certainly have stopped it. But those within keeping quite close, and the driver tarrying to be asked no questions, they reached the prison without interruption, and, once there, had him out, and safe within its gloomy walls, in a twinkling.

With eager eyes and strained attention, Mr. Haredale saw him chained, and locked and barred up in his cell. Nay, when he had left

the gaol, and stood in the free street without, he felt the iron plates upon the doors with his hands, and drew them over the stone wall, to assure himself that it was real; and to exult in its being so strong, and rough, and cold. It was not until he turned his back upon the gaol, and glanced along the empty streets, so lifeless and quiet in the bright morning, that he felt the weight upon his heart; that he knew he was tortured by anxiety for those he had left at home; and that home itself was but another bead in the long rosary of his regrets.

## CHAPTER LXII.

**T**HE prisoner, left to himself, sat down upon his bedstead: and resting his elbows on his knees, and his chin upon his hands, remained in that attitude for hours. It would be hard to say of what nature his reflections were. They had no distinctness, and, saving for some flashes now and then, no reference to his condition, or the train of circumstances by which it had been brought about. The cracks in the pavement of his cell, the chinks in the wall where stone was joined to stone, the bars in the window, the iron ring upon the floor,—such things as these, subsiding strangely into one another, and awaking an indescribable kind of interest and amusement, engrossed his whole mind; and although, at the bottom of his every thought, there was an uneasy sense of guilt and dread of death, he felt no more than that vague consciousness of it which a sleeper has of pain. It pursues him through his dreams, gnaws at the heart of all his fancied pleasures, robs the banquet of its taste, music of its sweetness, makes happiness itself unhappy, and yet is no bodily sensation, but a phantom without shape, or form, or visible presence; pervading everything, but having no existence; recognisable everywhere, but nowhere seen, or touched, or met with face to face, until the sleep is past, and waking agony returns.

After a long time the door of his cell opened. He looked up; saw the blind man enter; and relapsed into his former position.

Guided by his breathing, the visitor advanced to where he sat; and stopping beside him, and stretching out his hand to assure himself that he was right, remained, for a good space, silent.

"This is bad, Rudge. This is bad," he said at length.

The prisoner shuffled with his feet upon the



ground in turning his body from him, but made no other answer.

"How were you taken?" he asked. "And where? You never told me more than half your secret. No matter; I know it now. How was it, and where, eh?" he asked again, coming still nearer to him.

"At Chigwell," said the other.

"At Chigwell! How came you there?"

"Because I went there to avoid the man I stumbled on," he answered. "Because I was chased and driven there by him and Fate. Because I was urged to go there by something stronger than my own will. When I found him watching in the house she used to live in, night after night, I knew I never could escape him—never! and when I heard the Bell——"

He shivered; muttered that it was very cold; paced quickly up and down the narrow cell; and sitting down again, fell into his old posture.

"You were saying," said the blind man, after another pause, "that when you heard the Bell——"

"Let it be, will you?" he retorted in a hurried voice. "It hangs there yet."

The blind man turned a wistful and inquisitive face towards him, but he continued to speak without noticing him.

"I went to Chigwell in search of the mob. I have been so hunted and beset by this man, that I knew my only hope of safety lay in joining them. They had gone on before; I followed them when it left off."

"When what left off?"

"The Bell. They had quitted the place. I hoped that some of them might be still lingering among the ruins, and was searching for them when I heard"—he drew a long breath, and wiped his forehead with his sleeve—"his voice."

"Saying what?"

"No matter what. I don't know. I was then at the foot of the turret where I did the——"

"Ay," said the blind man, nodding his head with perfect composure, "I understand."

"I climbed the stair, or so much of it as was left; meaning to hide till he had gone. But he heard me; and followed almost as soon as I set foot upon the ashes."

"You might have hidden in the wall, and thrown him down, or stabbed him," said the blind man.

"Might I? Between that man and me was one who led him on—I saw it, though he did not—and raised above his head a bloody hand. It was in the room above that *he* and I stood glaring at each other on the night of the murder,

and before he fell he raised his hand like that, and fixed his eyes on me. I knew the chase would end there."

"You have a strong fancy," said the blind man with a smile.

"Strengthen yours with blood, and see what it will come to."

He groaned, and rocked himself, and looking up for the first time, said, in a low, hollow voice:

"Eight-and-twenty years! Eight-and-twenty years! He has never changed in all that time, never grown older, nor altered in the least degree. He has been before me in the dark night, and the broad sunny day; in the twilight, the moonlight, the sun-light, the light of fire, and lamp, and candle; and in the deepest gloom. Always the same! In company, in solitude, on land, on shipboard; sometimes leaving me alone for months, and sometimes always with me. I have seen him, at sea, come gliding in the dead of night along the bright reflection of the moon in the calm water; and I have seen him, on quays and market-places, with his hand uplifted, towering, the centre of a busy crowd, unconscious of the terrible form that had its silent stand among them. Fancy! Are you real? Am I? Are these iron fetters, riveted on me by the smith's hammer, or are they fancies I can shatter at a blow?"

The blind man listened in silence.

"Fancy! Do I fancy that I killed him? Do I fancy that, as I left the chamber where he lay, I saw the face of a man peeping from a dark door, who plainly showed me, by his fearful looks, that he suspected what I had done? Do I remember that I spoke fairly to him—that I drew nearer—nearer yet—with the hot knife in my sleeve? Do I fancy how *he* died? Did he stagger back into the angle of the wall into which I had hemmed him, and, bleeding inwardly, stand, not fall, a corpse before me? Did I see him for an instant, as I see you now, erect and on his feet—but dead?"

The blind man, who knew that he had risen, motioned him to sit down again upon his bedstead; but he took no notice of the gesture.

"It was then I thought, for the first time, of fastening the murder upon him. It was then I dressed him in my clothes, and dragged him down the back-stairs to the piece of water. Do I remember listening to the bubbles that came rising up when I had rolled him in? Do I remember wiping the water from my face, and, because the body splashed it there in its descent, feeling as if it *must* be blood?"

"Did I go home when I had done? And

oh, my God! how long it took to do! Did I stand before my wife, and tell her? Did I see her fall upon the ground; and, when I stooped to raise her, did she thrust me back with a force that cast me off as if I had been a child, staining the hand with which she clasped my wrist? Is that fancy?

"Did she go down upon her knees, and call on Heaven to witness that she and her unborn child renounced me from that hour; and did she, in words so solemn that they turned me cold—me, fresh from the horrors my own hands had made—warn me to fly while there was time; for though she would be silent, being my wretched wife, she would not shelter me? Did I go forth that night, abjured of God and man, and anchored deep in hell, to wander at my cable's length about the earth, and surely be drawn down at last?"

"Why did you return?" said the blind man.

"Why is blood red? I could no more help it than I could live without breath. I struggled against the impulse, but I was drawn back, through every difficult and adverse circumstance, as by a mighty engine. Nothing could stop me. The day and hour were none of my choice. Sleeping and waking, I had been among the old haunts for years—had visited my own grave. Why did I come back? Because this gaol was gaping for me, and he stood beckoning at the door."

"You were not known?" said the blind man.

"I was a man who had been twenty-two years dead. No. I was not known."

"You should have kept your secret better."

"My secret! *Mine!* It was a secret any breath of air could whisper at its will. The stars had it in their twinkling, the water in its flowing, the leaves in their rustling, the seasons in their return. It lurked in strangers' faces, and their voices. Everything had lips on which it always trembled.—*My secret!*"

"It was revealed by your own act at any rate," said the blind man.

"The act was not mine. I did it, but it was not mine. I was forced at times to wander round, and round, and round that spot. If you had chained me up when the fit was on me, I should have broken away and gone there. As truly as the loadstone draws iron towards it, so he, lying at the bottom of his grave, could draw me near him when he would. Was that fancy? Did I like to go there, or did I strive and wrestle with the power that forced me?"

The blind man shrugged his shoulders, and smiled incredulously. The prisoner again re-

sumed his old attitude, and for a long time both were mute.

"I suppose, then," said his visitor, at length breaking silence, "that you are penitent and resigned; that you desire to make peace with everybody (in particular with your wife, who has brought you to this); and that you ask no greater favour than to be carried to Tyburn as soon as possible? That being the case, I had better take my leave. I am not good enough to be company for you."

"Have I not told you," said the other fiercely, "that I have striven and wrestled with the power that brought me here? Has my whole life, for eight-and-twenty years, been one perpetual struggle and resistance, and do you think I want to lie down and die? Do all men shrink from death—I most of all?"

"That's better said. That's better spoken, Rudge—but I'll not call you that again—than anything you have said yet," returned the blind man, speaking more familiarly, and laying his hand upon his arm. "Lookye,—I never killed a man myself, for I have never been placed in a position that made it worth my while. Farther, I am not an advocate for killing men, and I don't think I should recommend it or like it—for it's very hazardous—under any circumstances. But as you had the misfortune to get into this trouble before I made your acquaintance, and as you have been my companion, and have been of use to me for a long time now, I overlook that part of the matter, and am only anxious that you shouldn't die unnecessarily. Now, I do not consider that, at present, it is at all necessary."

"What else is left me?" returned the prisoner. "To eat my way through these walls with my teeth?"

"Something easier than that," returned his friend. "Promise me that you will talk no more of these fancies of yours—idle, foolish things, quite beneath a man—and I'll tell you what I mean."

"Tell me," said the other.

"Your worthy lady with the tender conscience; your scrupulous, virtuous, punctilious, but not blindly affectionate wife——"

"What of her?"

"Is now in London."

"A curse upon her, be she where she may!"

"That's natural enough. If she had taken her annuity as usual, you would not have been here, and we should have been better off. But that's apart from the business. She's in London. Scared, as I suppose, and have no doubt, by my representation, when I waited upon her, that you were close at hand (which I,



of course, urged only as an inducement to compliance, knowing that she was not pining to see you), she left that place, and travelled up to London."

"How do you know?"

"From my friend the noble captain—the illustrious general—the bladder, Mr. Tappertit. I learnt from him the last time I saw him, which was yesterday, that your son who is called Barnaby—not after his father I suppose——"

"Death! does that matter now?"

"—You are impatient," said the blind man calmly; "it's a good sign, and looks like life—that your son Barnaby had been lured away from her by one of his companions who knew him of old at Chigwell; and that he is now among the rioters."

"And what is that to me? If father and son be hanged together, what comfort shall I find in that?"

"Stay—stay, my friend," returned the blind man with a cunning look, "you travel fast to journeys' ends. Suppose I track my lady out, and say thus much: 'You want your son, ma'am—good. I, knowing those who tempt him to remain among them, can restore him to you, ma'am—good. You must pay a price, ma'am, for his restoration—good again. The price is small, and easy to be paid—dear ma'am, that's best of all.'"

"What mockery is this?"

"Very likely she may reply in those words. 'No mockery at all,' I answer. 'Madam, a person said to be your husband (identity is difficult of proof after the lapse of many years) is in prison, his life in peril—the charge against him, murder. Now, ma'am, your husband has been dead a long, long time. The gentleman never can be confounded with him, if you will have the goodness to say a few words, on oath, as to when he died, and how; and that this person (who I am told resembles him in some degree) is no more he than I am. Such testimony will set the question quite at rest. Pledge yourself to me to give it, ma'am, and I will undertake to keep your son (a fine lad) out of harm's way until you have done this trifling service, when he shall be delivered up to you, safe and sound. On the other hand, if you decline to do so, I fear he will be betrayed, and handed over to the law, which will assuredly sentence him to suffer death. It is, in fact, a choice between his life and death. If you refuse, he swings. If you comply, the timber is not grown, nor the hemp sown, that shall do him any harm.'"

"There is a gleam of hope in this!" cried the prisoner.

"A gleam!" returned his friend, "a noon-blaze; a full and glorious daylight. Hush! I hear the tread of distant feet. Rely on me."

"When shall I hear more?"

"As soon as I do. I should hope, to-morrow. They are coming to say that our time for talk is over. I hear the jingling of the keys. Not another word of this just now, or they may overhear us."

As he said these words, the lock was turned, and one of the prison turnkeys, appearing at the door, announced that it was time for visitors to leave the gaol.

"So soon?" said Stagg meekly. "But it can't be helped. Cheer up, friend. This mistake will soon be set at rest, and then you are a man again! If this charitable gentleman will lead a blind man (who has nothing in return but prayers) to the prison porch, and set him with his face towards the west, he will do a worthy deed. Thank you, good sir. I thank you very kindly."

So saying, and pausing for an instant at the door to turn his grinning face towards his friend, he departed.

When the officer had seen him to the porch, he returned, and again unlocking and unbarring the door of the cell, set it wide open, informing its inmate that he was at liberty to walk in the adjacent yard, if he thought proper, for an hour.

The prisoner answered with a sullen nod; and being left alone again, sat brooding over what he had heard, and pondering upon the hopes the recent conversation had awakened; gazing abstractedly, the while he did so, on the light without, and watching the shadows thrown by one wall on another, and on the stone-paved ground.

It was a dull, square yard, made cold and gloomy by high walls, and seeming to chill the very sun-light. The stone, so bare, and rough, and obdurate, filled even him with longing thoughts of meadow land and trees; and with a burning wish to be at liberty. As he looked, he rose, and leaning against the door-post, gazed up at the bright blue sky, smiling even on that dreary home of crime. He seemed, for a moment, to remember lying on his back in some sweet-scented place, and gazing at it through moving branches, long ago.

His attention was suddenly attracted by a clanking sound—he knew what it was, for he had startled himself by making the same noise in walking to the door. Presently a voice began to sing, and he saw the shadow of a figure on

the pavement. It stopped—was silent all at once, as though the person for a moment had forgotten where he was, but soon remembered—and so, with the same clanking noise, the shadow disappeared.

He walked out into the court, and paced it to and fro; startling the echoes, as he went, with the harsh jangling of his fetters. There was a door near his, which, like his, stood ajar.

He had not taken half-a-dozen turns up and down the yard, when, standing still to observe this door, he heard the clanking sound again. A face looked out of the grated window—he saw it very dimly, for the cell was dark, and the bars were heavy—and directly afterwards a man appeared, and came towards him.

For the sense of loneliness he had, he might have been in the gaol a year. Made eager by the hope of companionship, he quickened his pace, and hastened to meet the man half-way—

What was this? His son!

They stood face to face, staring at each other. He shrinking and cowed, despite himself; Barnaby struggling with his imperfect memory, and wondering where he had seen that face before. He was not uncertain long, for suddenly he laid hands upon him, and striving to bear him to the ground, cried:

“Ah! I know! You are the robber!”

He said nothing in reply at first, but held down his head, and struggled with him silently. Finding the younger man too strong for him, he raised his face, looked close into his eyes, and said:

“I am your father.”

God knows what magic the name had for his ears; but Barnaby released his hold, fell back, and looked at him aghast. Suddenly he sprung towards him, put his arms about his neck, and pressed his head against his cheek.

Yes, yes, he was; he was sure he was. But where had he been so long, and why had he left his mother by herself, or worse than by herself, with her poor foolish boy? And had she really been as happy as they said? And where was she? Was she near there? She was not happy now, and he in gaol? Ah, no!

Not a word was said in answer; but Grip croaked loudly, and hopped about them, round and round, as if enclosing them in a magic circle, and invoking all the powers of mischief.

## CHAPTER LXIII.

**D**URING the whole of this day, every regiment in or near the metropolis was on duty in one or other part of the town; and the regulars and militia, in obedience to the orders which were sent to every barrack and station within twenty-four hours' journey, began to pour in by all the roads. But the disturbances had attained to such a formidable height, and the rioters had grown, with impunity, to be so audacious, that the sight of this great force, continually augmented by new arrivals, instead of operating as a check, stimulated them to outrages of greater hardihood than any they had yet committed; and helped to kindle a flame in London, the like of which had never been beheld, even in its ancient and rebellious times.

All yesterday, and on this day likewise, the commander-in-chief endeavoured to arouse the magistrates to a sense of their duty, and in particular the Lord Mayor, who was the faintest-hearted and most timid of them all. With this object, large bodies of the soldiery were several times dispatched to the Mansion House to await his orders: but as he could, by no threats or persuasions, be induced to give any, and as the men remained in the open street, fruitlessly for any good purpose, and thrivingly for a very bad one, these laudable attempts did harm rather than good. For the crowd, becoming speedily acquainted with the Lord Mayor's temper, did not fail to take advantage of it by boasting that even the civil authorities were opposed to the Papists, and could not find it in their hearts to molest those who were guilty of no other offence. These vaunts they took care to make within the hearing of the soldiers; and they, being naturally loath to quarrel with the people, received their advances kindly enough: answering, when they were asked if they desired to fire upon their countrymen, “No, they would be damned if they did;” and showing much honest simplicity and good-nature. The feeling that the military were No-Popery men, and were ripe for disobeying orders and joining the mob, soon became very prevalent in consequence. Rumours of their disaffection, and of their leaning towards the popular cause, spread from mouth to mouth with astonishing rapidity; and, whenever they were drawn up idly in the streets or squares, there were sure to be a crowd about them, cheering, and shaking hands, and treating them with a great show of confidence and affection.



By this time the crowd was everywhere; all concealment and disguise were laid aside, and they pervaded the whole town. If any man among them wanted money, he had but to knock at the door of a dwelling-house, or walk into a shop, and demand it in the rioters' name; and his demand was instantly complied with. The peaceable citizens being afraid to lay hands upon them, singly and alone, it may be easily supposed that, when gathered together in bodies, they were perfectly secure from interruption. They assembled in the streets, traversed them at their will and pleasure, and publicly concerted their plans. Business was quite suspended; the greater part of the shops were closed; most of the houses displayed a blue flag in token of their adherence to the popular side; and even the Jews in Houndsditch, Whitechapel, and those quarters, wrote upon their doors or window shutters, "This House is a True Protestant." The crowd was the law, and never was the law held in greater dread, or more implicitly obeyed.

It was about six o'clock in the evening, when a vast mob poured into Lincoln's Inn Fields by every avenue, and divided—evidently in pursuance of a previous design—into several parties. It must not be understood that this arrangement was known to the whole crowd, but that it was the work of a few leaders; who, mingling with the men as they came upon the ground, and calling to them to fall into this or that party, effected it as rapidly as if it had been determined on by a council of the whole number, and every man had known his place.

It was perfectly notorious to the assemblage that the largest body, which comprehended about two-thirds of the whole, was designed for the attack on Newgate. It comprehended all the rioters who had been conspicuous in any of their former proceedings; all those whom they recommended as daring hands and fit for the work; all those whose companions had been taken in the riots; and a great number of people who were relatives or friends of felons in the gaol. This last class included not only the most desperate and utterly abandoned villains in London, but some who were comparatively innocent. There was more than one woman there, disguised in man's attire, and bent upon the rescue of a child or brother. There were the two sons of a man who lay under sentence of death, and who was to be executed, along with three others, on the next day but one. There was a great party of boys whose fellow-pick-pockets were in the prison; and, at the skirts of all, a score of miserable women, outcasts from

the world, seeking to release some other fallen creature as miserable as themselves, or moved by a general sympathy perhaps—God knows—with all who were without hope, and wretched.

Old swords, and pistols without ball or powder; sledge-hammers, knives, axes, saws, and weapons pillaged from the butchers' shops; a forest of iron bars and wooden clubs; long ladders for scaling the walls, each carried on the shoulders of a dozen men; lighted torches; tow smeared with pitch, and tar, and brimstone; staves roughly plucked from fence and paling; and even crutches taken from crippled beggars in the streets; composed their arms. When all was ready, Hugh and Dennis, with Simon Tappertit between them, led the way. Roaring and chafing like an angry sea, the crowd pressed after them.

Instead of going straight down Holborn to the gaol, as all expected, their leaders took the way to Clerkenwell, and pouring down a quiet street, halted before a locksmith's house—the Golden Key.

"Beat at the door," cried Hugh to the men about him. "We want one of his craft tonight. Beat it in, if no one answers."

The shop was shut. Both door and shutters were of a strong and sturdy kind, and they knocked without effect. But the impatient crowd raising a cry of "Set fire to the house!" and torches being passed to the front, an upper window was thrown open, and the stout old locksmith stood before them.

"What now, you villains?" he demanded. "Where is my daughter?"

"Ask no questions of us, old man," retorted Hugh, waving his comrades to be silent, "but come down, and bring the tools of your trade. We want you."

"Want me!" cried the locksmith, glancing at the regimental dress he wore. "Ay, and if some that I could name possessed the hearts of mice, ye should have had me long ago. Mark me, my lad—and you about him do the same. There are a score among ye whom I see now and know, who are dead men from this hour. Begone! and rob an undertaker's while you can! You'll want some coffins before long."

"Will you come down?" cried Hugh.

"Will you give me my daughter, ruffian?" cried the locksmith.

"I know nothing of her," Hugh rejoined. "Burn the door!"

"Stop!" cried the locksmith in a voice that made them falter—presenting, as he spoke, a gun. "Let an old man do that. You can spare him better."

The young fellow who held the light, and who was stooping down before the door, rose hastily at these words, and fell back. The locksmith ran his eye along the upturned faces, and kept the weapon levelled at the threshold of his

house. It had no other rest than his shoulder, but was as steady as the house itself.

"Let the man who does it take heed to his prayers," he said firmly; "I warn him."

Snatching a torch from one who stood near



"STOP!" CRIED THE LOCKSMITH IN A VOICE THAT MADE THEM FALTER—PRESENTING, AS HE SPOKE, A GUN.  
"LET AN OLD MAN DO THAT. YOU CAN SPARE HIM BETTER."

him, Hugh was stepping forward with an oath, when he was arrested by a shrill and piercing shriek, and, looking upward, saw a fluttering garment on the housetop.

There was another shriek, and another, and then a shrill voice cried, "Is Simmun below?"

At the same moment a lean neck was stretched over the parapet, and Miss Miggs, indistinctly seen in the gathering gloom of evening, screeched in a frenzied manner, "Oh! dear gentlemen, let me hear Simmun's answer from his own lips. Speak to me, Simmun! Speak to me!"



Mr. Tappertit, who was not at all flattered by this compliment, looked up, and bidding her hold her peace, ordered her to come down and open the door, for they wanted her master, and would take no denial.

"Oh, good gentlemen!" cried Miss Miggs. "Oh, my own precious, precious Simmun——"

"Hold your nonsense, will you?" retorted Mr. Tappertit; "and come down and open the door.—G. Varden, drop that gun, or it will be worse for you."

"Don't mind his gun," screamed Miggs. "Simmun and gentlemen, I poured a mug of table-beer right down the barrel."

The crowd gave a loud shout, which was followed by a roar of laughter.

"It wouldn't go off, not if you was to load it up to the muzzle," screamed Miggs. "Simmun and gentlemen, I'm locked up in the front attic, through the little door on the right hand when you think you've got to the very top of the stairs—and up the flight of corner steps, being careful not to knock your heads against the rafters, and not to tread on one side, in case you should fall into the two-pair bedroom through the lath and plaster, which do not bear, but the contrary. Simmun and gentlemen, I've been locked up here for safety, but my endeavours has always been, and always will be, to be on the right side—the blessed side—and to pronounce the Pope of Babylon, and all her inward and her outward workings, which is Pagin. My sentiments is of little consequences, I know," cried Miggs with additional shrillness, "for my positions is but a servant, and as sich, of humilities; still I gives expressions to my feelings, and places my reliances on them which entertains my own opinions!"

• Without taking much notice of these outpourings of Miss Miggs after she had made her first announcement in relation to the gun, the crowd raised a ladder against the window where the locksmith stood, and notwithstanding that he closed, and fastened, and defended it manfully, soon forced an entrance by shivering the glass and breaking in the frames. After dealing a few stout blows about him, he found himself defenceless, in the midst of a furious crowd, which overflowed the room and softened off in a confused heap of faces at the door and window.

They were very wrathful with him (for he had wounded two men), and even called out to those in front to bring him forth and hang him on a lamp-post. But Gabriel was quite undaunted, and looked for Hugh and Dennis, who held him by either arm, to Simon Tappertit, who confronted him.

BARNABY RUDGE, 17.

"You have robbed me of my daughter," said the locksmith, "who is far dearer to me than my life; and you may take my life, if you will. I bless God that I have been enabled to keep my wife free of this scene; and that He has made me a man who will not ask mercy at such hands as yours."

"And a very game old gentleman you are," said Mr. Dennis approvingly; "and you express yourself like a man. What's the odds, brother, whether it's a lamp-post to-night, or a feather bed ten year to come, eh?"

The locksmith glanced at him disdainfully, but returned no other answer.

"For my part," said the hangman, who particularly favoured the lamp-post suggestion, "I honour your principles. They're mine exactly: In such sentiments as them," and here he emphasised his discourse with an oath, "I'm ready to meet you or any man half-way.—Have you got a bit of cord anywheres handy? Don't put yourself out of the way, if you haven't. A handkecher will do."

"Don't be a fool, master," whispered Hugh, seizing Varden roughly by the shoulder; "but do as you're bid. You'll soon hear what you're wanted for. Do it!"

"I'll do nothing at your request, or that of any scoundrel here," returned the locksmith. "If you want any service from me, you may spare yourselves the pains of telling me what it is. I tell you beforehand, I'll do nothing for you."

Mr. Dennis was so affected by this constancy on the part of the staunch old man, that he protested—almost with tears in his eyes—that to balk his inclinations would be an act of cruelty and hard dealing to which he, for one, never could reconcile his conscience. The gentleman, he said, had avowed in so many words that he was ready for working off; such being the case, he considered it their duty, as a civilised and enlightened crowd, to work him off. It was not often, he observed, that they had it in their power to accommodate themselves to the wishes of those from whom they had the misfortune to differ. Having now found an individual who expressed a desire which they could reasonably indulge, (and, for himself, he was free to confess that in his opinion that desire did honour to his feelings,) he hoped they would decide to accede to his proposition before going any further. It was an experiment which, skilfully and dexterously performed, would be over in five minutes, with great comfort and satisfaction to all parties; and though it did not become him (Mr. Dennis) to speak well of himself, he trusted he might be

allowed to say that he had practical knowledge of the subject, and, being naturally of an obliging and friendly disposition, would work the gentleman off with a deal of pleasure.

These remarks, which were addressed in the midst of a frightful din and turmoil to those immediately about him, were received with great favour; not so much, perhaps, because of the hangman's eloquence, as on account of the locksmith's obstinacy. Gabriel was in imminent peril, and he knew it; but he preserved a steady silence; and would have done so if they had been debating whether they should roast him at a slow fire.

As the hangman spoke, there was some stir and confusion on the ladder; and directly he was silent—so immediately upon his holding his peace, that the crowd below had no time to learn what he had been saying, or to shout in response—some one at the window cried:

"He has a grey head. He is an old man. Don't hurt him!"

The locksmith turned, with a start, towards the place from which the words had come, and looked hurriedly at the people who were hanging on the ladder and clinging to each other.

"Pay no respect to my grey hair, young man," he said, answering the voice, and not any one he saw. "I don't ask it. My heart is green enough to scorn and despise every man among you, band of robbers that you are!"

This incautious speech by no means tended to appease the ferocity of the crowd. They cried again to have him brought out; and it would have gone hard with the honest locksmith, but that Hugh reminded them, in answer, that they wanted his services, and must have them.

"So, tell him what we want," he said to Simon Tappertit, "and quickly. And open your ears, master, if you would ever use them after to-night!"

Gabriel folded his arms, which were now at liberty, and eyed his old 'prentice in silence.

"Lookye, Varden," said Sim, "we're bound for Newgate."

"I know you are," returned the locksmith. "You never said a truer word than that."

"To burn it down, I mean," said Simon, "and force the gates, and set the prisoners at liberty. You helped to make the lock of the great door."

"I did," said the locksmith. "You owe me no thanks for that—as you'll find before long."

"Maybe," returned his journeyman, "but you must show us how to force it."

"Must I!"

"Yes; for you know, and I don't. You

must come along with us, and pick it with your own hands."

"When I do," said the locksmith quietly, "my hands shall drop off at the wrists, and you shall wear them, Simon Tappertit, on your shoulders for epaulettes."

"We'll see that," cried Hugh, interposing, as the indignation of the crowd again burst forth. "You fill a basket with the tools he'll want, while I bring him down-stairs. Open the doors below, some of you. And light the great captain, others! Is there no business afoot, my lads, that you can do nothing but stand and grumble?"

They looked at one another, and quickly dispersing, swarmed over the house, plundering and breaking, according to their custom, and carrying off such articles of value as happened to please their fancy. They had no great length of time for these proceedings, for the basket of tools was soon prepared and slung over a man's shoulders. The preparations being now completed, and everything ready for the attack, those who were pillaging and destroying in the other rooms were called down to the workshop. They were about to issue forth, when the man who had been last up-stairs stepped forward, and asked if the young woman in the garret (who was making a terrible noise, he said, and kept on screaming without the least cessation) was to be released?

For his own part, Simon Tappertit would certainly have replied in the negative, but the mass of his companions, mindful of the good service she had done in the matter of the gun, being of a different opinion, he had nothing for it but to answer, Yes. The man, accordingly, went back again to the rescue, and presently returned with Miss Miggs, limp and doubled up, and very damp from much weeping.

As the young lady had given no tokens of consciousness on their way down-stairs, the bearer reported her either dead or dying; and, being at some loss what to do with her, was looking round for a convenient bench or heap of ashes on which to place her senseless form, when she suddenly came upon her feet by some mysterious means, thrust back her hair, stared wildly at Mr. Tappertit, cried, "My Simmun's life is not a victim!" and dropped into his arms with such promptitude that he staggered and reeled some paces back beneath his lovely burden.

"Oh, bother!" said Mr. Tappertit. "Here! Catch hold of her, somebody! Lock her up again; she never ought to have been let out."

"My Simmun!" cried Miss Miggs in tears,



and faintly. "My for ever, ever blessed Simmun!"

"Hold up, will you?" said Mr. Tappetit in a very unresponsive tone. "I'll let you fall if you don't. What are you sliding your feet off the ground for?"

"My angel Simmuns!" murmured Miggs—"he promised——"

"Promised! Well, and I'll keep my promise," answered Simon testily. "I mean to provide for you, don't I? Stand up!"

"Where am I to go? What is to become of me after my actions of this night?" cried Miggs. "What resting-places now remains but in the silent tombses?"

"I wish you was in the silent tombses, I do," cried Mr. Tappetit, "and boxed up tight in a good strong one. Here," he cried to one of the bystanders, in whose ear he whispered for a moment. "Take her off, will you? You understand where?"

The fellow nodded; and taking her in his arms, notwithstanding her broken protestations and her struggles (which latter species of opposition, involving scratches, was much more difficult of resistance), carried her away. They who were in the house poured out into the street; the locksmith was taken to the head of the crowd, and required to walk between his two conductors; the whole body was put in rapid motion; and without any shouting or noise they bore down straight on Newgate, and halted in a dense mass before the prison-gate.

#### CHAPTER LXIV.

**B**REAKING the silence they had hitherto preserved, they raised a great cry as soon as they were ranged before the gaol, and demanded to speak with the governor. Their visit was not wholly unexpected, for his house, which fronted the street, was strongly barricaded, the wicket-gate of the prison was closed up, and at no loophole or grating was any person to be seen. Before they had repeated their summons many times, a man appeared upon the roof of the governor's house, and asked what it was they wanted.

Some said one thing, some another, and some only groaned and hissed. It being now nearly dark, and the house high, many persons in the throng were not aware that any one had come to answer them, and continued their clamour until the intelligence was gradually diffused through the whole concourse. Ten minutes or

more elapsed before any one voice could be heard with tolerable distinctness; during which interval the figure remained perched alone, against the summer-evening sky, looking down into the troubled street.

"Are you," said Hugh at length, "Mr. Akerman, the head gaoler here?"

"Of course he is, brother," whispered Dennis. But Hugh, without minding him, took his answer from the man himself.

"Yes," he said. "I am."

"You have got some friends of ours in your custody, master."

"I have a good many people in my custody." He glanced downward, as he spoke, into the gaol: and the feeling that he could see into the different yards, and that he overlooked everything which was hidden from their view by the rugged walls, so lashed and goaded the mob, that they howled like wolves.

"Deliver up our friends," said Hugh, "and you may keep the rest."

"It's my duty to keep them all. I shall do my duty."

"If you don't throw the doors open, we shall break 'em down," said Hugh; "for we will have the rioters out."

"All I can do, good people," Akerman replied, "is to exhort you to disperse; and to remind you that the consequences of any disturbance in this place will be very severe, and bitterly repented by most of you, when it is too late."

He made as though he would retire when he had said these words, but he was checked by the voice of the locksmith.

"Mr. Akerman," cried Gabriel, "Mr. Akerman!"

"I will hear no more from any of you," replied the governor, turning towards the speaker, and waving his hand.

"But I am not one of them," said Gabriel. "I am an honest man, Mr. Akerman; a respectable tradesman—Gabriel Varden, the locksmith. You know me?"

"You among the crowd!" cried the governor in an altered voice.

"Brought here by force—brought here to pick the lock of the great door for them," rejoined the locksmith. "Bear witness for me, Mr. Akerman, that I refuse to do it; and that I will not do it, come what may of my refusal. If any violence is done to me, please to remember this."

"Is there no way of helping you?" said the governor.

"None, Mr. Akerman. You'll do your duty, and I'll do mine. Once again, you robbers and

cut-throats," said the locksmith, turning round upon them, "I refuse. Ah! Howl till you're hoarse. I refuse."

"Stay—stay!" said the gaoler hastily. "Mr. Varden, I know you for a worthy man, and one who would do no unlawful act except upon compulsion—"

"Upon compulsion, sir," interposed the locksmith, who felt that the tone in which this was said conveyed the speaker's impression that he had ample excuse for yielding to the furious multitude who beset and hemmed him in on every side, and among whom he stood, an old man, quite alone; "upon compulsion, sir, I'll do nothing."

"Where is that man," said the keeper anxiously, "who spoke to me just now?"

"Here!" Hugh replied.

"Do you know what the guilt of murder is, and that by keeping that honest tradesman at your side you endanger his life?"

"We know it very well," he answered; "for what else did we bring him here? Let's have our friends, master, and you shall have your friend. Is that fair, lads?"

The mob replied to him with a loud Hurrah!

"You see how it is, sir!" cried Varden. "Keep 'em out, in King George's name. Remember what I have said. Good night!"

There was no more parley. A shower of stones and other missiles compelled the keeper of the gaol to retire; and the mob, pressing on, and swarming round the walls, forced Gabriel Varden close up to the door.

In vain the basket of tools was laid upon the ground before him, and he was urged in turn by promises, by blows, by offers of reward, and threats of instant death, to do the office for which they had brought him there. "No," cried the sturdy locksmith, "I will not!"

He had never loved his life so well as then, but nothing could move him. The savage faces that glared upon him, look where he would; the cries of those who thirsted, like wild animals, for his blood; the sight of men pressing forward, and trampling down their fellows, as they strove to reach him, and struck at him, above the heads of other men, with axes and with iron bars; all failed to daunt him. He looked from man to man, and face to face, and still, with quickened breath and lessening colour, cried firmly, "I will not!"

Dennis dealt him a blow upon the face which felled him to the ground. He sprung up again like a man in the prime of life, and, with blood upon his forehead, caught him by the throat.

"You cowardly dog!" he said. "Give me my daughter! Give me my daughter!"

They struggled together. Some cried "Kill him," and some (but they were not near enough) strove to trample him to death. Tug as he would at the old man's wrists, the hangman could not force him to unclench his hands.

"Is this all the return you make me, you ungrateful monster?" he articulated with great difficulty, and with many oaths.

"Give me my daughter!" cried the locksmith, who was now as fierce as those who gathered round him. "Give me my daughter!"

He was down again, and up, and down once more, and buffeting with a score of them, who banded him from hand to hand, when one tall fellow, fresh from a slaughter-house, whose dress and great thigh-boots smoked hot with grease and blood, raised a pole-axe, and swearing a horrible oath, aimed it at the old man's uncovered head. At that instant, and in the very act, he fell himself, as if struck by lightning, and over his body a one-armed man came darting to the locksmith's side. Another man was with him, and both caught the locksmith roughly in their grasp.

"Leave him to us!" they cried to Hugh—struggling, as they spoke, to force a passage backward through the crowd. "Leave him to us! Why do you waste your whole strength on such as he, when a couple of men can finish him in as many minutes? You lose time. Remember the prisoners! Remember Barnaby!"

The cry ran through the mob. Hammers began to rattle on the walls; and every man strove to reach the prison, and be among the foremost rank. Fighting their way through the press and struggle as desperately as if they were in the midst of enemies rather than their own friends, the two men retreated with the locksmith between them, and dragged him through the very heart of the concourse.

And now the strokes began to fall like hail upon the gate, and on the strong building; for those who could not reach the door spent their fierce rage on anything—even on the great blocks of stone which shivered their weapons into fragments, and made their hands and arms to tingle as if the walls were active in their stout resistance, and dealt them back their blows. The clash of iron ringing upon iron mingled with the deafening tumult, and sounded high above it, as the great sledge-hammers rattled on the nailed and plated door; the sparks flew off in showers; men worked in gangs, and at short intervals relieved each other, that all their strength might be devoted to the work; but



there stood the portal still, as grim and dark and strong as ever, and, saving for the dints upon its battered surface, quite unchanged.

While some brought all their energies to bear upon this toilsome task; and some, rearing ladders against the prison, tried to clamber to the summit of the walls they were too short to scale; and some again engaged a body of police a hundred strong, and beat them back and trod them under foot by force of numbers; others besieged the house on which the gaoler had appeared, and, driving in the door, brought out his furniture, and piled it up against the prison-gate, to make a bonfire which should burn it down. As soon as this device was understood, all those who had laboured hitherto, cast down their tools and helped to swell the heap; which reached half-way across the street, and was so high, that those who threw more fuel on the top got up by ladders. When all the keeper's goods were flung upon this costly pile to the last fragment, they smeared it with the pitch, and tar, and rosin they had brought, and sprinkled it with turpentine. To all the wood-work round the prison doors they did the like, leaving not a joist or beam untouched. This infernal christening performed, they fired the pile with lighted matches and with blazing tow, and then stood by, awaiting the result.

The furniture being very dry, and rendered more combustible by wax and oil, besides the arts they had used, took fire at once. The flames roared high and fiercely, blackening the prison wall, and twining up its lofty front like burning serpents. At first they crowded round the blaze, and vented their exultation only in their looks; but when it grew hotter and fiercer—when it crackled, leaped, and roared like a great furnace—when it shone upon the opposite houses, and lighted up not only the pale and wondering faces at the windows, but the inmost corners of each habitation—when, through the deep red heat and glow, the fire was seen sporting and toying with the door, now clinging to its obdurate surface, now gliding off with fierce inconstancy and soaring high into the sky, anon returning to fold it in its burning grasp and lure it to its ruin—when it shone and gleamed so brightly that the church clock of St. Sepulchre's, so often pointing to the hour of death, was legible as in broad day, and the vane upon its steeple-top glittered in the unwonted light like something richly jewelled—when blackened stone and sombre brick grew ruddy in the deep reflection, and windows shone like burnished gold, dotting the longest distance in the fiery vista with their specks of brightness—

when wall and tower, and roof and chimney-stack, seemed drunk, and in the flickering glare appeared to reel and stagger—when scores of objects, never seen before, burst out upon the view, and things the most familiar put on some new aspect—then the mob began to join the whirl, and with loud yells, and shouts, and clamour such as happily is seldom heard, bestirred themselves to feed the fire, and keep it at its height.

Although the heat was so intense that the paint on the houses over against the prison, parched and crackled up, and swelling into boils, as it were, from excess of torture, broke and crumbled away; although the glass fell from the window-sashes, and the lead and iron on the roofs blistered the incautious hand that touched them, and the sparrows in the eaves took wing, and, rendered giddy by the smoke, fell fluttering down upon the blazing pile; still the fire was tended unceasingly by busy hands, and round it men were going always. They never slackened in their zeal, or kept aloof, but pressed upon the flames so hard, that those in front had much ado to save themselves from being thrust in; if one man swooned or dropped, a dozen struggled for his place, and that although they knew the pain, and thirst, and pressure to be unendurable. Those who fell down in fainting fits, and were not crushed or burnt, were carried to an inn yard close at hand, and dashed with water from a pump; of which bucketsful were passed from man to man among the crowd; but such was the strong desire of all to drink, and such the fighting to be first, that, for the most part, the whole contents were spilled upon the ground, without the lips of one man being moistened.

Meanwhile, and in the midst of all the roar and outcry, those who were nearest to the pile heaped up again the burning fragments that came toppling down, and raked the fire about the door, which, although a sheet of flame, was still a door fast locked and barred, and kept them out. Great pieces of blazing wood were passed, besides, above the people's heads to such as stood about the ladders, and some of these, climbing up to the topmost stave, and holding on with one hand by the prison wall, exerted all their skill and force to cast these fire-brands on the roof, or down into the yards within. In many instances their efforts were successful; which occasioned a new and appalling addition to the horrors of the scene; for the prisoners within, seeing from between their bars that the fire caught in many places, and thrived fiercely, and being all locked up in strong cells for the

night, began to know that they were in danger of being burnt alive. This terrible fear, spreading from cell to cell, and from yard to yard, vented itself in such dismal cries and wailings, and in such dreadful shrieks for help, that the whole gaol resounded with the noise; which was loudly heard even above the shouting of the mob and roaring of the flames, and was so full of agony and despair, that it made the boldest tremble.

It was remarkable that these cries began in that quarter of the gaol which fronted Newgate Street, where it was well known the men who were to suffer death on Thursday were confined. And not only were these four, who had so short a time to live, the first to whom the dread of being burnt occurred, but they were, throughout, the most importunate of all: for they could be plainly heard, notwithstanding the great thickness of the walls, crying that the wind set that way, and that the flames would shortly reach them; and calling to the officers of the gaol to come and quench the fire from a cistern which was in their yard, and full of water. Judging from what the crowd without the walls could hear from time to time, these four doomed wretches never ceased to call for help; and that with as much distraction, and in as great a frenzy of attachment to existence, as though each had an honoured, happy life before him, instead of eight-and-forty hours of miserable imprisonment, and then a violent and shameful death.

But the anguish and suffering of the two sons of one of these men, when they heard, or fancied that they heard, their father's voice, is past description. After wringing their hands and rushing to and fro as if they were stark mad, one mounted on the shoulders of his brother, and tried to clamber up the face of the high wall, guarded at the top with spikes and points of iron. And when he fell among the crowd, he was not deterred by his bruises, but mounted up again, and fell again, and when he found the feat impossible, began to beat the stones and tear them with his hands, as if he could that way make a breach in the strong building, and force a passage in. At last they cleft their way among the mob about the door, though many men, a dozen times their match, had tried in vain to do so, and were seen in—yes, in—the fire, striving to prize it down with crowbars.

Nor were they alone affected by the outcry from within the prison. The women who were looking on shrieked loudly, beat their hands together, stopped their ears, and many fainted; the men who were not near the walls and active

in the siege; rather than do nothing, tore up the pavement of the street, and did so with a haste and fury they could not have surpassed if that had been the gaol, and they were near their object. Not one living creature in the throng was for an instant still. The whole great mass were mad.

A shout! Another! Another yet, though few knew why, or what it meant. But those around the gate had seen it slowly yield, and drop from its topmost hinge. It hung on that side by but one, but it was upright still, because of the bar, and its having sunk, of its own weight, into the heap of ashes at its foot. There was now a gap at the top of the doorway, through which could be descried a gloomy passage, cavernous and dark. Pile up the fire!

It burnt fiercely. The door was red-hot, and the gap wider. They vainly tried to shield their faces with their hands, and standing as if in readiness for a spring, watched the place. Dark figures, some crawling on their hands and knees, some carried in the arms of others, were seen to pass along the roof. It was plain the gaol could hold out no longer. The keeper and his officers, and their wives and children, were escaping. Pile up the fire!

The door sank down again: it settled deeper in the cinders—tottered—yielded—was down!

As they shouted again, they fell back for a moment, and left a clear space about the fire that lay between them and the gaol entry. Hugh leaped upon the blazing heap, and scattering a train of sparks into the air, and making the dark lobby glitter with those that hung upon his dress, dashed into the gaol.

The hangman followed. And then so many rushed upon their track, that the fire got trodden down and thinly strewn about the street; but there was no need of it now, for, inside and out, the prison was in flames.

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## CHAPTER LXV.

**D**URING the whole course of the terrible scene which was now at its height, one man in the gaol suffered a degree of fear and mental torment which had no parallel in the endurance even of those who lay under sentence of death.

When the rioters first assembled before the building, the murderer was roused from sleep—if such slumbers as his may have that blessed name—by the roar of voices and the



struggling of a great crowd. He started up as these sounds met his ear, and, sitting on his bedstead, listened.

After a short interval of silence the noise burst out again. Still listening attentively, he made out, in course of time, that the gaol was besieged by a furious multitude. His guilty conscience instantly arrayed these men against himself, and brought the fear upon him that he would be singled out, and torn to pieces.

Once impressed with the terror of this conceit, everything tended to confirm and strengthen it. His double crime, the circumstances under which it had been committed, the length of time that had elapsed, and its discovery in spite of all, made him, as it were, the visible object of the Almighty's wrath. In all the crime and vice and moral gloom of the great pest-house of the capital, he stood alone, marked and singled out by his great guilt, a Lucifer among the devils. The other prisoners were a host, hiding and sheltering each other—a crowd like that without the walls. He was one man against the whole united concourse; a single, solitary, lonely man, from whom the very captives in the gaol fell off and shrunk appalled.

It might be that the intelligence of his capture having been bruited abroad, they had come there purposely to drag him out and kill him in the street; or it might be that they were the rioters, and, in pursuance of an old design, had come to sack the prison. But in either case he had no belief or hope that they would spare him. Every shout they raised, and every sound they made, was a blow upon his heart. As the attack went on, he grew more wild and frantic in his terror: tried to pull away the bars that guarded the chimney and prevented him from climbing up: called loudly on the turnkeys to cluster round the cell and save him from the fury of the rabble; or put him in some dungeon underground, no matter of what depth, how dark it was, or loathsome, or beset with rats and creeping things, so that it hid him and was hard to find.

But no one came, or answered him. Fearful, even while he cried to them, of attracting attention, he was silent. By-and-by, he saw, as he looked from his grated window, a strange glimmering on the stone walls and pavement of the yard. It was feeble at first, and came and went, as though some officers with torches were passing to and fro upon the roof of the prison. Soon it reddened, and lighted brands came whirling down, spattering the ground with fire, and burning sullenly in corners. One rolled beneath a wooden bench, and set it in a blaze; another

caught a water-spout, and so went climbing up the wall, leaving a long straight track of fire behind it. After a time, a slow thick shower of burning fragments, from some upper portion of the prison which was blazing nigh, began to fall before his door. Remembering that it opened outwards, he knew that every spark which fell upon the heap, and in the act lost its bright life, and died an ugly speck of dust and rubbish, helped to entomb him in a living grave. Still, though the gaol resounded with shrieks and cries for help,—though the fire bounded up as if each separate flame had had a tiger's life, and roared as though, in everyone, there were a hungry voice,—though the heat began to grow intense, and the air suffocating, and the clamour without increased, and the danger of his situation even from one merciless element was every moment more extreme,—still he was afraid to raise his voice again, lest the crowd should break in, and should, of their own ears or from the information given them by the other prisoners, get the clue to his place of confinement. Thus fearful alike of those within the prison and of those without; of noise and silence; light and darkness; of being released, and being left there to die; he was so tortured and tormented, that nothing man has ever done to man in the horrible caprice of power and cruelty exceeds his self-inflicted punishment.

Now, now, the door was down. Now they came rushing through the gaol, calling to each other in the vaulted passages; clashing the iron gates dividing yard from yard; beating at the doors of cells and wards; wrenching off bolts and locks and bars; tearing down the door-posts to get men out; endeavouring to drag them by main force through gaps and windows where a child could scarcely pass; whooping and yelling without a moment's rest; and running through the heat and flames as if they were cased in metal. By their legs, their arms, the hair upon their heads, they dragged the prisoners out. Some threw themselves upon the captives as they got towards the door, and tried to file away their irons; some danced about them with a frenzied joy, and rent their clothes, and were ready, as it seemed, to tear them limb from limb. Now a party of a dozen men came darting through the yard into which the murderer cast fearful glances from his darkened window; dragging a prisoner along the ground, whose dress they had nearly torn from his body in their mad eagerness to set him free, and who was bleeding and senseless in their hands. Now a score of prisoners ran to and fro, who had lost themselves in the intricacies



of the prison, and were so bewildered with the noise and glare that they knew not where to turn or what to do, and still cried out for help as loudly as before. Anon some famished wretch, whose theft had been a loaf of bread or scrap of butcher's meat, came skulking past, barefooted—going slowly away because that gaol, his house, was burning; not because he had any other, or had friends to meet, or old haunts to revisit, or any liberty to gain but liberty to starve and die. And then a knot of

highwaymen went trooping by, conducted by the friends they had among the crowd, who muffled their fetters as they went along with handkerchiefs and bands of hay, and wrapped them in coats and cloaks, and gave them drink from bottles, and held it to their lips, because of their handcuffs, which there was no time to remove. All this, and Heaven knows how much more, was done amidst a noise, a hurry, and distraction, like nothing that we know of, even in our dreams; which seemed for ever on the



THE BURNING OF NEWGATE.

rise, and never to decrease for the space of a single instant.

He was still looking down from his window upon these things, when a band of men with torches, ladders, axes, and many kinds of weapons, poured into the yard, and hammering at his door, inquired if there were any prisoner within. He left the window when he saw them coming, and drew back into the remotest corner of the cell; but, although he returned them no answer, they had a fancy that some one was

inside, for they presently set ladders against it, and began to tear away the bars at the casement; not only that, indeed, but with pickaxes to hew down the very stones in the wall.

As soon as they had made a breach at the window large enough for the admission of a man's head, one of them thrust in a torch and looked all round the room. He followed this man's gaze until it rested on himself, and heard him demand why he had not answered, but made him no reply.



In the general surprise and wonder, they were used to this. Without saying anything more, they enlarged the breach until it was large enough to admit the body of a man, and then came dropping down upon the floor, one after another, until the cell was full. They caught him up among them, handed him to the window, and those who stood upon the ladders passed him down upon the pavement of the yard. Then the rest came out, one after another, and, bidding him fly, and lose no time, or the way would be choked up, hurried away to rescue others.

It seemed not a minute's work from first to last. He staggered to his feet, incredulous of what had happened, when the yard was filled again, and a crowd rushed on, hurrying Barnaby among them. In another minute—not so much : another minute ! the same instant, with no lapse or interval between—he and his son were being passed from hand to hand through the dense crowd in the street, and were glancing backward at a burning pile which some one said was Newgate.

From the moment of their first entrance into the prison, the crowd dispersed themselves about it, and swarmed into every chink and crevice, as if they had a perfect acquaintance with its innermost parts, and bore in their minds an exact plan of the whole. For this immediate knowledge of the place they were, no doubt, in a great degree indebted to the hangman, who stood in the lobby, directing some to go this way, some that, and some the other ; and who materially assisted in bringing about the wonderful rapidity with which the release of the prisoners was effected.

But this functionary of the law reserved one important piece of intelligence, and kept it snugly to himself. When he had issued his instructions relative to every other part of the building, and the mob were dispersed from end to end, and busy at their work, he took a bundle of keys from a kind of cupboard in the wall, and going by a private passage near the chapel (it joined the governor's house, and was then on fire), betook himself to the condemned cells, which were a series of small, strong, dismal rooms, opening on a low gallery, guarded, at the end at which he entered, by a strong iron wicket, and at its opposite extremity by two doors and a thick grate. Having double locked the wicket, and assured himself that the other entrances were well secured, he sat down on a bench in the gallery, and sucked the head of his stick, with an air of the utmost complacency, tranquillity, and contentment.

It would have been strange enough, a man's

enjoying himself in this quiet manner, while the prison was burning, and such a tumult was cleaving the air, though he had been outside the walls. But here, in the very heart of the building, and, moreover, with the prayers and cries of the four men under sentence sounding in his ears, and their hands, stretched out through the gratings in their cell doors, clasped in frantic entreaty before his very eyes, it was particularly remarkable. Indeed, Mr. Dennis appeared to think it an uncommon circumstance, and to banter himself upon it ; for he thrust his hat on one side, as some men do when they are in a waggish humour, sucked the head of his stick with a higher relish, and smiled as though he would say, "Dennis, you're a rum dog ; you're a queer fellow ; you're capital company, Dennis, and quite a character !"

He sat in this way for some minutes, while the four men in the cells, certain that somebody had entered the gallery, but could not see who, gave vent to such piteous entreaties as wretches in their miserable condition may be supposed to have been inspired with : urging, whoever it was, to set them at liberty for the love of Heaven ; and protesting, with great fervour, and truly enough, perhaps, for the time, that if they escaped, they would amend their ways, and would never, never, never again do wrong before God or man, but would lead penitent and sober lives, and sorrowfully repent the crimes they had committed. The terrible energy with which they spoke would have moved any person, no matter how good or just (if any good or just person could have strayed into that sad place that night), to have set them at liberty ; and, while he would have left any other punishment to its free course, to have saved them from this last dreadful and repulsive penalty ; which never turned a man inclined to evil, and has hardened thousands who were half inclined to good.

Mr. Dennis, who had been bred and nurtured in the good old school, and had administered the good old laws on the good old plan, always once and sometimes twice every six weeks, for a long time, bore these appeals with a deal of philosophy. Being at last, however, rather disturbed in his pleasant reflection by their repetition, he rapped at one of the doors with his stick, and cried :

"Hold your noise there, will you?"

At this they all cried together that they were to be hanged on the next day but one ; and again implored his aid.

"Aid ! For what?" said Mr. Dennis, playfully rapping the knuckles of the hand nearest him.

"To save us!" they cried.

"Oh, certainly!" said Mr. Dennis, winking at the wall in the absence of any friend with whom he could humour the joke. "And so you're to be worked off, are you, brothers?"

"Unless we are released to-night," one of them cried, "we are dead men!"

"I tell you what it is," said the hangman gravely; "I'm afraid, my friend, that you're not in that 'ere state of mind that's suitable to your condition, then: you're not a-going to be released: don't think it.—Will you leave off that 'ere indecent row? I wonder you an't ashamed of yourselves, I do."

He followed up this reproof by rapping every set of knuckles one after the other, and having done so, resumed his seat again with a cheerful countenance.

"You've had law," he said, crossing his legs and elevating his eyebrows: "laws have been made a purpose for you; a very handsome prison's been made a purpose for you; a parson's kept a purpose for you; a constitootional officer's appointed a purpose for you; carts is maintained a purpose for you—and yet you're not contented!—*Will* you hold that noise, you sir in the furthest?"

A groan was the only answer.

"So well as I can make out," said Mr. Dennis in a tone of mingled badinage and remonstrance, "there's not a man among you. I begin to think I'm on the opposite side, and among the ladies; though, for the matter of that, I've seen a many ladies face it out in a manner that did honour to the sex.—You in number two, don't grind them teeth of yours. Worse manners," said the hangman, rapping at the door with his stick, "I never see in this place afore. I'm ashamed on you. You're a disgrace to the Bailey."

After pausing for a moment to hear if anything could be pleaded in justification, Mr. Dennis resumed in a sort of coaxing tone:

"Now lookee here, you four. I'm come here to take care of you, and see that you an't burnt, instead of the other thing. It's no use your making any noise, for you won't be found out by them as has broken in, and you'll only be hoarse when you come to the speeches,—which is a pity. What I say in respect to the speeches always is, 'Give it mouth.' That's my maxim. Give it mouth. I've heerd," said the hangman, pulling off his hat to take his handkerchief from the crown and wipe his face, and then putting it on again a little more on one side than before, "I've heerd a eloquence on them boards—you know what boards I mean—and have heerd a degree of mouth given to them speeches, that

they was as clear as a bell, and as good as a play. There's a pattern! And always, when a thing of this natur's to come off, what I stand up for is, a proper frame of mind. Let's have a proper frame of mind, and we can go through with it creditable—pleasant—sociable. Whatever you do (and I address myself, in particular, to you in the furthest), never snivel. I'd sooner by half, though I lose by it, see a man tear his clothes a purpose to spile 'em before they come to me, than find him snivelling. It's ten to one a better frame of mind, every way!"

While the hangman addressed them to this effect, in the tone and with the air of a pastor in familiar conversation with his flock, the noise had been in some degree subdued; for the rioters were busy in conveying the prisoners to the Sessions House, which was beyond the main walls of the prison, though connected with it, and the crowd were busy too in passing them from thence along the street. But when he had got thus far in his discourse, the sound of voices in the yard showed plainly that the mob had returned, and were coming that way; and directly afterwards a violent crashing at the grate below gave note of their attack upon the cells (as they were called) at last.

It was in vain the hangman ran from door to door, and covered the grates, one after another, with his hat, in futile efforts to stifle the cries of the four men within; it was in vain he dogged their outstretched hands, and beat them with his stick, or menaced them with new and lingering pains in the execution of his office; the place resounded with their cries. These, together with the feeling that they were now the last men in the gaol, so worked upon and stimulated the besiegers, that in an incredibly short space of time they forced the strong grate down below, which was formed of iron rods two inches square, drove in the two other doors as if they had been but deal partitions, and stood at the end of the gallery with only a bar or two between them and the cells.

"Holloa!" cried Hugh, who was the first to look into the dusky passage. "Dennis before us! Well done, old boy! Be quick, and open here, for we shall be suffocated in the smoke, going out."

"Go out at once, then," said Dennis. "What do you want here?"

"Want!" echoed Hugh. "The four men."

"Four devils!" cried the hangman. "Don't you know they're left for death on Thursday? Don't you respect the law—the constitootion—nothing? Let the four men be."

"Is this a time for joking?" cried Hugh.



"Do you hear 'em? Pull away these bars that have got fixed between the door and the ground; and let us in."

"Brother," said the hangman in a low voice, as he stooped under pretence of doing what Hugh desired, but only looked up in his face, "can't you leave these here four men to me, if I've the whim? You do what you like, and have what you like of everything for your share, —give me my share. I want these four men left alone, I tell you!"

"Pull the bars down, or stand out of the way," was Hugh's reply.

"You can turn the crowd if you like, you know that well enough, brother," said the hangman slowly. "What! You *will* come in, will you?"

"Yes."

"You won't let these men alone, and leave 'em to me? You've no respect for nothing—haven't you?" said the hangman, retreating to the door by which he had entered, and regarding his companion with a scowl. "You *will* come in, will you, brother?"

"I tell you, yes. What the devil ails you? Where are you going?"

"No matter where I'm going," rejoined the hangman, looking in again at the iron wicket, which he had nearly shut upon himself, and held ajar. "Remember where you're coming. That's all!"

With that, he shook his likeness at Hugh, and giving him a grin, compared with which his usual smile was amiable, disappeared and shut the door.

Hugh paused no longer, but, goaded alike by the cries of the convicts and by the impatience of the crowd, warned the man immediately behind him—the way was only wide enough for one abreast—to stand back, and wielded a sledge-hammer with such strength, that after a few blows the iron bent and broke, and gave them free admittance.

If the two sons of one of these men, of whom mention has been made, were furious in their zeal before, they had now the wrath and vigour of lions. Calling to the man within each cell to keep as far back as he could, lest the axes crashing through the door should wound him, a party went to work upon each one, to beat it in by sheer strength, and force the bolts and staples from their hold. But although these two lads had the weakest party, and the worst armed, and did not begin until after the others, having stopped to whisper to him through the grate, that door was the first open, and that man the first out. As they dragged him into the gallery

to knock off his irons, he fell down among them, a mere heap of chains, and was carried out in that state on men's shoulders, with no sign of life.

The release of these four wretched creatures, and conveying them, astounded and bewildered, into the street so full of life—a spectacle they had never thought to see again until they emerged from solitude and silence upon that last journey, when the air should be heavy with the pent-up breath of thousands, and the streets and houses should be built and roofed with human faces, not with bricks and tiles and stones—was the crowning horror of the scene. Their pale and haggard looks, and hollow eyes; their staggering feet, and hands stretched out as if to save themselves from falling; their wandering and uncertain air; the way they heaved and gasped for breath, as though in water, when they were first plunged into the crowd; all marked them for the men. No need to say, "This one was doomed to die;" there were the words broadly stamped and branded on his face. The crowd fell off, as if they had been laid out for burial, and had risen in their shrouds; and many were seen to shudder, as though they had been actually dead men, when they chanced to touch or brush against their garments.

At the bidding of the mob, the houses were all illuminated that night—lighted up from top to bottom as at a time of public gaiety and joy. Many years afterwards, old people who lived in their youth near this part of the City remembered being in a great glare of light, within doors and without, and as they looked, timid and frightened children, from the windows, seeing *a face* go by. Though the whole great crowd and all its other terrors had faded from their recollection, this one object remained; alone, distinct, and well remembered. Even in the unpractised minds of infants, one of these doomed men, darting past, and but an instant seen, was an image of force enough to dim the whole concourse; to find itself an all-absorbing place, and hold it ever after.

When this last task had been achieved, the shouts and cries grew fainter; the clank of fetters, which had resounded on all sides as the prisoners escaped, was heard no more; all the noises of the crowd subsided into a hoarse and sullen murmur as it passed into the distance; and when the human tide had rolled away, a melancholy heap of smoking ruins marked the spot where it had lately chafed and roared.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

**A**LTHOUGH he had had no rest upon the previous night, and had watched with little intermission for some weeks past, sleeping only in the day by starts and snatches, Mr. Haredale, from the dawn of morning until sunset, sought his niece in every place where he deemed it possible she could have taken refuge. All day long, nothing, save a draught of water, passed his lips; though he prosecuted his inquiries far and wide, and never so much as sat down once.

In every quarter he could think of; at Chigwell and in London; at the houses of the tradespeople with whom he dealt, and of the friends he knew; he pursued his search. A prey to the most harrowing anxieties and apprehensions, he went from magistrate to magistrate, and finally to the Secretary of State. The only comfort he received was from this minister, who assured him that the Government, being now driven to the exercise of the extreme prerogatives of the Crown, were determined to exert them; that a proclamation would probably be out upon the morrow, giving to the military discretionary and unlimited power in the suppression of the riots; that the sympathies of the King, the Administration, and both Houses of Parliament, and, indeed, of all good men of every religious persuasion, were strongly with the injured Catholics; and that justice should be done them at any cost or hazard. He told him, moreover, that other persons whose houses had been burnt, had for a time lost sight of their children or their relatives, but had in every case, within his knowledge, succeeded in discovering them; that his complaint should be remembered, and fully stated in the instructions given to the officers in command, and to all the inferior myrmidons of justice; and that everything that could be done to help him should be done, with a good-will and in good faith.

Grateful for this consolation, feeble as it was in its reference to the past, and little hope as it afforded him in connection with the subject of distress which lay nearest to his heart; and really thankful for the interest the minister expressed, and seemed to feel, in his condition; Mr. Haredale withdrew. He found himself, with the night coming on, alone in the streets; and destitute of any place in which to lay his head.

He entered an hotel near Charing Cross, and ordered some refreshment and a bed. He saw

that his faint and worn appearance attracted the attention of the landlord and his waiters; and thinking that they might suppose him to be penniless, took out his purse, and laid it on the table. It was not that, the landlord said in a faltering voice. If he were one of those who had suffered by the rioters, he durst not give him entertainment. He had a family of children, and had been twice warned to be careful in receiving guests. He heartily prayed his forgiveness, but what could he do?

Nothing. No man felt that more sincerely than Mr. Haredale. He told the man as much, and left the house.

Feeling that he might have anticipated this occurrence, after what he had seen at Chigwell in the morning, where no man dared to touch a spade, though he offered a large reward to all who would come and dig among the ruins of his house, he walked along the Strand; too proud to expose himself to another refusal, and of too generous a spirit to involve in distress or ruin any honest tradesman who might be weak enough to give him shelter. He wandered into one of the streets by the side of the river, and was pacing in a thoughtful manner up and down, thinking of things that had happened long ago, when he heard a servant-man at an upper window call to another at the opposite side of the street, that the mob were setting fire to Newgate.

To Newgate! where that man was! His failing strength returned, his energies came back with tenfold vigour, on the instant. If it were possible—if they should set the murderer free—was he, after all he had undergone, to die with the suspicion of having slain his own brother, dimly gathering about him—

He had no consciousness of going to the gaol; but there he stood before it. There was the crowd, wedged and pressed together in a dense, dark, moving mass; and there were the flames soaring up into the air. His head turned round and round, lights flashed before his eyes, and he struggled hard with two men.

"Nay, nay," said one. "Be more yourself, my good sir! We attract attention here. Come away. What can you do among so many men?"

"The gentleman's always for doing something," said the other, forcing him along as he spoke. "I like him for that. I do like him for that."

They had by this time got him into a court hard by the prison. He looked from one to the other, and, as he tried to release himself, felt that he tottered on his feet. He who had spoken first was the old gentleman whom he had seen at the Lord Mayor's. The other was



John Grueby, who had stood by him so manfully at Westminster.

"What does this mean?" he asked them faintly. "How came we together?"

"On the skirts of the crowd," returned the distiller; "but come with us. Pray come with us. You seem to know my friend here?"

"Surely," said Mr. Haredale, looking in a kind of stupor at John.

"He'll tell you then," returned the old gentleman, "that I am a man to be trusted. He's my servant. He was lately (as you know, I have no doubt) in Lord George Gordon's service; but he left it, and brought, in pure good-will to me and others, who are marked by the rioters, such intelligence as he had picked up of their designs."

"—On one condition, please, sir," said John, touching his hat. "No evidence against my lord—a misled man—a kind-hearted man, sir. My lord never intended this."

"The condition will be observed, of course," rejoined the old distiller. "It's a point of honour. But come with us, sir; pray come with us."

John Grueby added no entreaties, but he adopted a different kind of persuasion, by putting his arm through one of Mr. Haredale's, while his master took the other, and leading him away with all speed.

Sensible, from a strange lightness in his head, and a difficulty in fixing his thoughts on anything, even to the extent of bearing his companions in his mind for a minute together without looking at them, that his brain was affected by the agitation and suffering through which he had passed, and to which he was still a prey, Mr. Haredale let them lead him where they would. As they went along, he was conscious of having no command over what he said or thought, and that he had a fear of going mad.

The distiller lived, as he had told him when they first met, on Holborn Hill, where he had great storehouses, and drove a large trade. They approached his house by a back-entrance, lest they should attract the notice of the crowd, and went into an upper room which faced towards the street: the windows, however, in common with those of every other room in the house, were boarded up inside, in order that, out of doors, all might appear quite dark.

They laid him on a sofa in this chamber, perfectly insensible; but John immediately fetching a surgeon, who took from him a large quantity of blood, he gradually came to himself. As he was, for the time, too weak to walk, they had no difficulty in persuading him to remain there all night, and got him to bed without loss of a

minute. That done, they gave him cordial and some toast, and presently a pretty strong composing draught, under the influence of which he soon fell into a lethargy, and, for a time, forgot his troubles.

The vintner, who was a very hearty old fellow and a worthy man, had no thoughts of going to bed himself, for he had received several threatening warnings from the rioters, and had, indeed, gone out that evening to try and gather from the conversation of the mob whether his house was to be the next attacked. He sat all night in an easy-chair in the same room—dozing a little now and then—and received from time to time the reports of John Grueby and two or three other trustworthy persons in his employ, who went out into the streets as scouts; and for whose entertainment an ample allowance of good cheer (which the old vintner, despite his anxiety, now and then attacked himself) was set forth in an adjoining chamber.

These accounts were of a sufficiently alarming nature from the first; but, as the night wore on, they grew so much worse, and involved such a fearful amount of riot and destruction, that, in comparison with these new tidings, all the previous disturbances sunk to nothing.

The first intelligence that came was of the taking of Newgate, and the escape of all the prisoners, whose track, as they made up Holborn and into the adjacent streets, was proclaimed to those citizens who were shut up in their houses by the rattling of their chains, which formed a dismal concert, and was heard in every direction, as though so many forges were at work. The flames, too, shone so brightly through the vintner's skylights, that the rooms and staircases below were nearly as light as in broad day; while the distant shouting of the mob seemed to shake the very walls and ceilings.

At length they were heard approaching the house, and some minutes of terrible anxiety ensued. They came close up, and stopped before it; but, after giving three loud yells, went on. And although they returned several times that night, creating new alarms each time, they did nothing there, having their hands full. Shortly after they had gone away for the first time, one of the scouts came running in with the news that they had stopped before Lord Mansfield's house in Bloomsbury Square.

Soon afterwards there came another, and another, and then the first returned again, and so, by little and little, their tale was this:—That the mob, gathering round Lord Mansfield's house, had called on those within to open the door, and receiving no reply (for Lord and Lady

Mansfield were at that moment escaping by the back-way), forced an entrance according to their usual custom. That they then began to demolish the house with great fury, and setting fire to it in several parts, involved in a common ruin the whole of the costly furniture, the plate and jewels, a beautiful gallery of pictures, the rarest collection of manuscripts ever possessed by any one private person in the world, and worse than all, because nothing could replace this loss, the great Law Library, on almost every page of which were notes in the Judge's own hand, of inestimable value,—being the results of the study and experience of his whole life. That while they were howling and exulting round the fire, a troop of soldiers, with a magistrate among them, came up, and being too late (for the mischief was by that time done), began to disperse the crowd. That the Riot Act being read, and the crowd still resisting, the soldiers received orders to fire, and levelling their muskets, shot dead at the first discharge six men and a woman, and wounded many persons; and loading again directly, fired another volley, but over the people's heads it was supposed, as none were seen to fall. That thereupon, and daunted by the shrieks and tumult, the crowd began to disperse, and the soldiers went away, leaving the killed and wounded on the ground: which they had no sooner done than the rioters came back again, and taking up the dead bodies and the wounded people, formed into a rude procession, having the bodies in the front. That in this order they paraded off with a horrible merriment; fixing weapons in the dead men's hands to make them look as if alive; and preceded by a fellow ringing Lord Mansfield's dinner bell with all his might.

The scouts reported further, that this party meeting with some others who had been at similar work elsewhere, they all united into one, and drafting off a few men with the killed and wounded, marched away to Lord Mansfield's country seat at Caen Wood, between Hampstead and Highgate; bent upon destroying that house likewise, and lighting up a great fire there, which from that height should be seen all over London. But in this they were disappointed, for a party of horse having arrived before them, they retreated faster than they went, and came straight back to town.

There being now a great many parties in the streets, each went to work according to its humour, and a dozen houses were quickly blazing, including those of Sir John Fielding and two other justices, and four in Holborn—one of the greatest thoroughfares in London—which were

all burning at the same time, and burned until they went out of themselves, for the people cut the engine hose, and would not suffer the firemen to play upon the flames. At one house near Moorfields they found, in one of the rooms, some canary birds in cages, and these they cast into the fire alive. The poor little creatures screamed, it was said, like infants, when they were flung upon the blaze; and one man was so touched that he tried in vain to save them, which roused the indignation of the crowd, and nearly cost him his life.

At this same house, one of the fellows who went through the rooms, breaking the furniture and helping to destroy the building, found a child's doll—a poor toy—which he exhibited at the window to the mob below, as the image of some unholy saint which the late occupants had worshipped. While he was doing this, another man with an equally tender conscience (they had both been foremost in throwing down the canary birds for roasting alive), took his seat on the parapet of the house, and harangued the crowd, from a pamphlet circulated by the Association, relative to the true principles of Christianity! Meanwhile, the Lord Mayor, with his hands in his pockets, looked on as an idle man might look at any other show, and seem mightily satisfied to have got a good place.

Such were the accounts brought to the old vintner by his servants as he sat at the side of Mr. Haredale's bed, having been unable even to doze after the first part of the night; too much disturbed by his own fears, by the cries of the mob, the light of the fires, and the firing of the soldiers. Such, with the addition of the release of all the prisoners in the New Gaol at Clerkenwell, and as many robberies of passengers in the streets as the crowd had leisure to indulge in, were the scenes of which Mr. Haredale was happily unconscious, and which were all enacted before midnight.

## CHAPTER LXVII.

**W**HEN darkness broke away, and morning began to dawn, the town wore a strange aspect indeed.

Sleep had scarcely been thought of all night. The general alarm was so apparent in the faces of the inhabitants, and its expression was so aggravated by want of rest (few persons, with any property to lose, having dared to go to bed since Monday), that a stranger coming into



the streets would have supposed some mortal pest or plague to have been raging. In place of the usual cheerfulness and animation of morning, everything was dead and silent. The shops remained unopened, offices and warehouses were shut, the coach and chair stands were deserted, no carts or waggons rumbled through the slowly-waking streets, the early cries were all hushed; a universal gloom prevailed. Great numbers of people were out, even at daybreak, but they flitted to and fro as though they shrank from the sound of their own footsteps; the public ways were haunted rather than frequented; and round the smoking ruins people stood apart from one another, and in silence, not venturing to condemn the rioters, or to be supposed to do so, even in whispers.

At the Lord President's in Piccadilly, at Lambeth Palace, at the Lord Chancellor's in Great Ormond Street, in the Royal Exchange, the Bank, the Guildhall, the Inns of Court, the Courts of Law, and every chamber fronting the streets near Westminster Hall and the Houses of Parliament, parties of soldiers were posted before daylight. A body of Horse Guards paraded Palace Yard; an encampment was formed in the Park, where fifteen hundred men and five battalions of Militia were under arms; the Tower was fortified, the drawbridges were raised, the cannon loaded and pointed, and two regiments of artillery busied in strengthening the fortress and preparing it for defence. A numerous detachment of soldiers were stationed to keep guard at the New River Head, which the people had threatened to attack, and where, it was said, they meant to cut off the main pipes, so that there might be no water for the extinction of the flames. In the Poultry, and on Cornhill, and at several other leading points, iron chains were drawn across the street; parties of soldiers were distributed in some of the old City churches while it was yet dark, and in several private houses (among them, Lord Rockingham's in Grosvenor Square), which were blockaded as though to sustain a siege, and had guns pointed from the windows. When the sun rose, it shone into handsome apartments filled with armed men; the furniture hastily heaped away in corners, and made of little or no account in the terror of the time—on arms glittering in City chambers, among desks and stools, and dusty books—into little smoky churchyards in odd lanes and by-ways, with soldiers lying down among the tombs, or lounging under the shade of the one old tree, and their pile of muskets sparkling in the light—on solitary sentries pacing up and down in courtyards, silent now, but yesterday resounding

with the din and hum of business—everywhere on guard-rooms, garrisons, and threatening preparations.

As the day crept on, still more unusual sights were witnessed in the streets. The gates of the King's Bench and Fleet Prisons, being opened at the usual hour, were found to have notices affixed to them, announcing that the rioters would come that night to burn them down. The Wardens, too well knowing the likelihood there was of this promise being fulfilled, were fain to set their prisoners at liberty, and give them leave to move their goods; so, all day, such of them as had any furniture were occupied in conveying it, some to this place, some to that, and not a few to the brokers' shops, where they gladly sold it for any wretched price those gentry chose to give. There were some broken men among these debtors who had been in gaol so long, and were so miserable and destitute of friends, so dead to the world, and utterly forgotten and uncared for, that they implored their gaolers not to set them free, and to send them, if need were, to some other place of custody. But they, refusing to comply, lest they should incur the anger of the mob, turned them into the streets, where they wandered up and down, hardly remembering the ways untrodden by their feet so long, and crying—such abject things those rotten-hearted gaols had made them—as they slunk off in their rags, and dragged their slipshod feet along the pavement.

Even of the three hundred prisoners who had escaped from Newgate, there were some—a few, but there were some—who sought their gaolers out and delivered themselves up: preferring imprisonment and punishment to the horrors of such another night as the last. Many of the convicts, drawn back to their old place of captivity by some indescribable attraction, or by a desire to exult over it in its downfall, and glut their revenge by seeing it in ashes, actually went back in broad noon, and loitered about the cells. Fifty were re-taken at one time, on this next day, within the prison walls; but their fate did not deter others, for there they went in spite of everything, and there they were taken in twos and threes, twice or thrice a day, all through the week. Of the fifty just mentioned, some were occupied in endeavouring to rekindle the fire; but in general they seemed to have no object in view but to prowl and lounge about the old place; being often found asleep in the ruins, or sitting talking there, or even eating and drinking, as in a choice retreat.

Besides the notices on the gates of the Fleet and the King's Bench, many similar announce-

ments were left, before one o'clock at noon, at the houses of private individuals; and further, the mob proclaimed their intention of seizing on the Bank, the Mint, the Arsenal at Woolwich, and the Royal Palaces. The notices were seldom delivered by more than one man, who, if it were at a shop, went in, and laid it, with a bloody threat perhaps, upon the counter; or if it were at a private house, knocked at the door, and thrust it in the servant's hand. Notwithstanding the presence of the military in every quarter of the town, and the great force in the Park, these messengers did their errands with impunity all through the day. So did two boys who went down Holborn alone, armed with bars taken from the railings of Lord Mansfield's house, and demanded money for the rioters. So did a tall man on horseback who made a collection for the same purpose in Fleet Street, and refused to take anything but gold.

A rumour had now got into circulation, too, which diffused a greater dread all through London even than these publicly announced intentions of the rioters, though all men knew that, if they were successfully effected, there must ensue a national bankruptcy and general ruin. It was said that they meant to throw the gates of Bedlam open, and let all the madmen loose. This suggested such dreadful images to the people's minds, and was indeed an act so fraught with new and unimaginable horrors in the contemplation, that it beset them more than any loss or cruelty of which they could foresee the worst, and drove many sane men nearly mad themselves.

So the day passed on: the prisoners moving their goods; people running to and fro in the streets, carrying away their property; groups standing in silence round the ruins; all business suspended; and the soldiers, disposed as has been already mentioned, remaining quite inactive. So the day passed on, and dreaded night drew near again.

At last, at seven o'clock in the evening, the Privy Council issued a solemn proclamation that it was now necessary to employ the military, and that the officers had most direct and effectual orders, by an immediate exertion of their utmost force, to repress the disturbances; and warning all good subjects of the king to keep themselves, their servants, and apprentices within doors that night. There were then delivered out to every soldier on duty thirty-six rounds of powder and ball; the drums beat; and the whole force was under arms at sunset.

The City authorities, stimulated by these vigorous measures, held a Common Council;

passed a vote thanking the military associations who had tendered their aid to the civil authorities; accepted it; and placed them under the direction of the two sheriffs. At the queen's palace, a double guard, the yeomen on duty, the groom porters, and all other attendants were stationed in the passages and on the staircases at seven o'clock, with strict instructions to be watchful on their posts all night; and all the doors were locked. The gentlemen of the Temple, and the other Inns, mounted guard within their gates, and strengthened them with the great stones of the pavement, which they took up for the purpose. In Lincoln's Inn they gave up the hall and commons to the Northumberland militia, under the command of Lord Algernon Percy; in some few of the City wards the burgesses turned out, and, without making a very fierce show, looked brave enough. Some hundreds of stout gentlemen threw themselves, armed to the teeth, into the halls of the different companies, double locked and bolted all the gates, and dared the rioters (among themselves) to come on at their peril. These arrangements being all made simultaneously, or nearly so, were completed by the time it got dark; and then the streets were comparatively clear, and were guarded at all the great corners and chief avenues by the troops: while parties of the officers rode up and down in all directions, ordering chance stragglers home, and admonishing the residents to keep within their houses, and, if any firing ensued, not to approach the windows. More chains were drawn across such of the thoroughfares as were of a nature to favour the approach of a great crowd, and at each of these points a considerable force was stationed. All these precautions having been taken, and it being now quite dark, those in command awaited the result in some anxiety: and not without a hope that such vigilant demonstrations might of themselves dishearten the populace, and prevent any new outrages.

But in this reckoning they were cruelly mistaken, for in half an hour, or less, as though the setting in of night had been their preconcerted signal, the rioters having previously, in small parties, prevented the lighting of the street lamps, rose like a great sea; and that in so many places at once, and with such inconceivable fury, that those who had the direction of the troops knew not, at first, where to turn or what to do. One after another, new fires blazed up in every quarter of the town, as though it were the intention of the insurgents to wrap the city in a circle of flames, which, contracting by degrees, should burn the whole to ashes; the



crowd swarmed and roared in every street ; and none but rioters and soldiers being out of doors, it seemed to the latter as if all London were arrayed against them, and they stood alone against the town.

In two hours six-and-thirty fires were raging—six-and-thirty great conflagrations. Among them the Borough Clink in Tooley Street, the King's Bench, the Fleet, and the New Bride-well. In almost every street there was a battle ; and in every quarter the muskets of the troops were heard above the shouts and tumult of the mob. The firing began in the Poultry, where the chain was drawn across the road, where nearly a score of people were killed on the first discharge. Their bodies having been hastily carried into St. Mildred's Church by the soldiers, the latter fired again, and following fast upon the crowd, who began to give way when they saw the execution that was done, formed across Cheapside, and charged them at the point of the bayonet.

The streets were now a dreadful spectacle. The shouts of the rabble, the shrieks of women, the cries of the wounded, and the constant firing formed a deafening and an awful accompaniment to the sights which every corner presented. Wherever the road was obstructed by the chains, there the fighting and the loss of life were greatest ; but there was hot work and bloodshed in almost every leading thoroughfare.

At Holborn Bridge, and on Holborn Hill, the confusion was greater than in any other part ; for the crowd that poured out of the City in two great streams, one by Ludgate Hill, and one by Newgate Street, united at that spot, and formed a mass so dense that at every volley the people seemed to fall in heaps. At this place a large detachment of soldiery were posted, who fired, now up Fleet Market, now up Holborn, now up Snow Hill—constantly raking the streets in each direction. At this place, too, several large fires were burning, so that all the terrors of that terrible night seemed to be concentrated in one spot.

Full twenty times, the rioters, headed by one man who wielded an axe in his right hand, and bestrode a brewer's horse of great size and strength, caparisoned with fetters taken out of Newgate, which clanked and jingled as he went, made an attempt to force a passage at this point, and fire the vintner's house. Full twenty times they were repulsed with loss of life, and still came back again : and though the fellow at their head was marked and singled out by all, and was a conspicuous object as the only rioter

on horseback, not a man could hit him. So surely as the smoke cleared away, so surely there was he ; calling hoarsely to his companions, brandishing his axe above his head, and dashing on as though he bore a charmed life, and was proof against ball and powder.

This man was Hugh ; and in every part of the riot he was seen. He headed two attacks upon the Bank, helped to break open the Toll-houses on Blackfriars Bridge, and cast the money into the street : fired two of the prisons with his own hand : was here, and there, and everywhere—always foremost—always active—striking at the soldiers, cheering on the crowd, making his horse's iron music heard through all the yell and uproar : but never hurt or stopped. Turn him at one place, and he made a new struggle in another ; force him to retreat at this point, and he advanced on that directly. Driven from Holborn for the twentieth time, he rode at the head of a great crowd straight upon St. Paul's, attacked a guard of soldiers who kept watch over a body of prisoners within the iron railings, forced them to retreat, rescued the men they had in custody, and, with this accession to his party, came back again, mad with liquor and excitement, and hallooing them on like a demon.

It would have been no easy task for the most careful rider to sit a horse in the midst of such a throng and tumult ; but though this madman rolled upon his back (he had no saddle) like a boat upon the sea, he never for an instant lost his seat, or failed to guide him where he would. Through the very thickest of the press, over dead bodies and burning fragments, now on the pavement, now in the road, now riding up a flight of steps to make himself the more conspicuous to his party, and now forcing a passage through a mass of human beings, so closely squeezed together that it seemed as if the edge of a knife would scarcely part them—on he went, as though he could surmount all obstacles by the mere exercise of his will. And perhaps his not being shot was in some degree attributable to this very circumstance ; for his extreme audacity, and the conviction that he must be one of those to whom the proclamation referred, inspired the soldiers with a desire to take him alive, and diverted many an aim which otherwise might have been more near the mark.

The vintner and Mr. Haredale, unable to sit quietly listening to the noise without seeing what went on, had climbed to the roof of the house, and hiding behind a stack of chimneys, were looking cautiously down into the street, almost hoping that after so many repulses the

rioters would be foiled, when a great shout proclaimed that a party were coming round the other way; and the dismal jingling of those accursed fetters warned them next moment that they, too, were led by Hugh. The soldiers had advanced into Fleet Market, and were dispersing the people there; so that they came on with hardly any check, and were soon before the house.

"All's over now," said the vintner. "Fifty thousand pounds will be scattered in a minute. We must save ourselves. We can do no more, and shall have reason to be thankful if we do as much."

Their first impulse was to clamber along the roofs of the houses, and, knocking at some garret window for admission, pass down that way into the street, and so escape. But another fierce cry from below, and a general upturning of the faces of the crowd, apprised them that they were discovered, and even that Mr. Haredale was recognised; for Hugh, seeing him plainly in the bright glare of the fire, which in that part made it as light as day, called to him by his name, and swore to have his life.

"Leave me here," said Mr. Haredale, "and in Heaven's name, my good friend, save yourself! Come on!" he muttered, as he turned towards Hugh, and faced him without any further effort at concealment. "This roof is high, and if we close, we will die together!"

"Madness," said the honest vintner, pulling him back, "sheer madness. Hear reason, sir. My good sir, hear reason. I could never make myself heard by knocking at a window now; and even if I could, no one would be bold enough to connive at my escape. Through the cellars there's a kind of passage into the back-street by which we roll casks in and out. We shall have time to get down there before they can force an entry. Do not delay an instant, but come with me—for both our sakes—for mine—my dear good sir!"

As he spoke, and drew Mr. Haredale back, they had both a glimpse of the street. It was but a glimpse, but it showed them the crowd, gathering and clustering round the house: some of the armed men pressing to the front to break down the doors and windows, some bringing brands from the nearest fire, some with lifted faces following their course upon the roof, and pointing them out to their companions: all raging and roaring like the flames they lighted up. They saw some men thirsting for the treasures of strong liquor which they knew were stored within; they saw others, who had been wounded, sinking down into the

opposite doorways and dying, solitary wretches, in the midst of all the vast assemblage; here a frightened woman trying to escape; and there a lost child; and there a drunken ruffian, unconscious of the death-wound on his head, raving and fighting to the last. All these things, and even such trivial incidents as a man with his hat off, or turning round, or stooping down, or shaking hands with another, they marked distinctly; yet in a glance so brief that, in the act of stepping back, they lost the whole, and saw but the pale faces of each other, and the red sky above them.

Mr. Haredale yielded to the entreaties of his companion—more because he was resolved to defend him than for any thought he had of his own life, or any care he entertained for his own safety—and quickly re-entering the house, they descended the stairs together. Loud blows were thundering on the shutters, crowbars were already thrust beneath the door, the glass fell from the sashes, a deep light shone through every crevice, and they heard the voices of the foremost in the crowd so close to every chink and keyhole, that they seemed to be hoarsely whispering their threats into their very ears. They had but a moment reached the bottom of the cellar steps, and shut the door behind them, when the mob broke in.

The vaults were profoundly dark, and having no torch or candle—for they had been afraid to carry one, lest it should betray their place of refuge—they were obliged to grope with their hands. But they were not long without light, for they had not gone far when they heard the crowd forcing the door; and, looking back among the low arched passages, could see them in the distance hurrying to and fro with flashing links, breaching the casks, staving the great vats, turning off upon the right hand and the left, into the different cellars, and lying down to drink at the channels of strong spirits which were already flowing on the ground.

They hurried on, not the less quickly for this; and had reached the only vault which lay between them and the passage out, when suddenly, from the direction in which they were going, a strong light gleamed upon their faces; and before they could slip aside, or turn back, or hide themselves, two men (one bearing a torch) came upon them, and cried in an astonished whisper, "Here they are!"

At the same instant they pulled off what they wore upon their heads. Mr. Haredale saw before him Edward Chester, and then saw, when the vintner gasped his name, Joe Willet.

Ay, the same Joe, though with an arm the



less, who used to make the quarterly journey on the grey mare to pay the bill to the purple-faced vintner; and that very same purple-faced vintner, formerly of Thames Street, now looked him in the face, and challenged him by name.

"Give me your hand," said Joe softly, taking it whether the astonished vintner would or no. "Don't fear to shake it; it's a friendly one and a hearty one, though it has no fellow. Why, how well you look, and how bluff you are! And you—God bless you, sir. Take heart, take heart. We'll find them. Be of good cheer; we have not been idle."

There was something so honest and frank in Joe's speech, that Mr. Haredale put his hand in his involuntarily, though their meeting was suspicious enough. But his glance at Edward Chester, and that gentleman's keeping aloof, were not lost upon Joe, who said bluntly, glancing at Edward while he spoke:

"Times are changed, Mr. Haredale, and times have come when we ought to know friends from enemies, and make no confusion of names. Let me tell you that, but for this gentleman, you would most likely have been dead by this time, or badly wounded at the best."

"What do you say?" asked Mr. Haredale.

"I say," said Joe, "first, that it was a bold thing to be in the crowd at all disguised as one of them; though I won't say much about that, on second thoughts, for that's my case too. Secondly, that it was a brave and glorious action—that's what I call it—to strike that fellow off his horse before their eyes!"

"What fellow? Whose eyes?"

"What fellow, sir!" cried Joe. "A fellow who has no good-will to you, and who has the daring and devilry in him of twenty fellows. I know him of old. Once in the house, *he* would have found you, here or anywhere. The rest owe you no particular grudge, and, unless they see you, will only think of drinking themselves dead. But we lose time. Are you ready?"

"Quite," said Edward. "Put out the torch, Joe, and go on. And be silent, there's a good fellow."

"Silent or not silent," murmured Joe as he dropped the flaring link upon the ground, crushed it with his foot, and gave his hand to Mr. Haredale, "it was a brave and glorious action;—no man can alter that."

Both Mr. Haredale and the worthy vintner were too amazed and too much hurried to ask any further questions, so followed their conductors in silence. It seemed, from a short whispering which presently ensued between them and the vintner relative to the best way of

escape, that they had entered by the back-door, with the connivance of John Grueby, who watched outside with the key in his pocket, and whom they had taken into their confidence. A part of the crowd coming up that way just as they entered, John had double locked the door again, and made off for the soldiers, so that means of retreat was cut from under them.

However, as the front-door had been forced, and this minor crowd, being anxious to get at the liquor, had no fancy for losing time in breaking down another, but had gone round and got in from Holborn with the rest, the narrow lane in the rear was quite free of people. So, when they had crawled through the passage indicated by the vintner (which was a mere shelving trap for the admission of casks), and had managed with some difficulty to unchain and raise the door at the upper end, they emerged into the street without being observed or interrupted. Joe still holding Mr. Haredale tight, and Edward taking the same care of the vintner, they hurried through the streets at a rapid pace; occasionally standing aside to let some fugitives go by, or to keep out of the way of the soldiers who followed them, and whose questions, when they halted to put any, were speedily stopped by one whispered word from Joe.

## CHAPTER LXVIII.

**W**HILE Newgate was burning on the previous night, Barnaby and his father, having been passed among the crowd from hand to hand, stood in Smithfield, on the outskirts of the mob, gazing at the flames like men who had been suddenly aroused from sleep. Some moments elapsed before they could distinctly remember where they were, or how they got there; or recollected that, while they were standing idle and listless spectators of the fire, they had tools in their hands, which had been hurriedly given them that they might free themselves from their fetters.

Barnaby, heavily ironed as he was, if he had obeyed his first impulse, or if he had been alone, would have made his way back to the side of Hugh, who to his clouded intellect now shone forth with the new lustre of being his preserver and truest friend. But his father's terror of remaining in the streets communicated itself to him when he comprehended the full extent of

his fears, and impressed him with the same eagerness to fly to a place of safety.

In a corner of the market, among the pens for cattle, Barnaby knelt down, and pausing every now and then to pass his hand over his father's face, or look up to him with a smile, knocked off his irons. When he had seen him spring, a free man, to his feet, and had given vent to the transport of delight which the sight awakened, he went to work upon his own, which soon fell rattling down upon the ground, and left his limbs unfettered.

Gliding away together when this task was accomplished, and passing several groups of men, each gathered round a stooping figure to hide him from those who passed, but unable to repress the clanking sound of hammers, which told that they were too busy at the same work, the two fugitives made towards Clerkenwell, and passing thence to Islington, as the nearest point of egress, were quickly in the fields. After wandering about for a long time, they found, in a pasture near Finchley, a poor shed, with walls of mud, and roof of grass and brambles, built for some cow-herd, but now deserted. Here they lay down for the rest of the night.

They wandered to and fro when it was day, and once Barnaby went off alone to a cluster of little cottages two or three miles away, to purchase some bread and milk. But, finding no better shelter, they returned to the same place, and lay down again to wait for night.

Heaven alone can tell with what vague thoughts of duty and affection; with what strange promptings of nature, intelligible to him as to a man of radiant mind and most enlarged capacity; with what dim memories of children he had played with when a child himself, who had prattled of their fathers, and of loving them, and being loved; with how many half-remembered, dreamy associations of his mother's grief and tears and widowhood; he watched and tended this man. But that a vague and shadowy crowd of such ideas came slowly on him; that they taught him to be sorry when he looked upon his haggard face, that they overflowed his eyes when he stooped to kiss him, that they kept him waking in a tearful gladness, shading him from the sun, fanning him with leaves, soothing him when he started in his sleep—ah! what a troubled sleep it was!—and wondering when *she* would come to join them, and be happy, is the truth. He sat beside him all that day; listening for her footsteps in every breath of air, looking for her shadow on the gently-waving grass, twining the hedge-flowers for her pleasure when she came, and his when he awoke; and

stooping down from time to time to listen to his mutterings, and wonder why he was so restless in that quiet place. The sun went down, and night came on, and he was still quite tranquil; busied with these thoughts, as if there were no other people in the world, and the dull cloud of smoke hanging on the immense city in the distance, hid no vices, no crimes, no life or death, or causes of disquiet—nothing but clear air.

But the hour had now come when he must go alone to find out the blind man, (a task that filled him with delight,) and bring him to that place; taking especial care that he was not watched or followed on his way back. He listened to the directions he must observe, repeated them again and again, and, after twice or thrice returning to surprise his father with a light-hearted laugh, went forth, at last, upon his errand: leaving Grip, whom he had carried from the gaol in his arms, to his care.

Fleet of foot, and anxious to return, he sped swiftly on towards the city, but could not reach it before the fires began, and made the night angry with their dismal lustre. When he entered the town—it might be that he was changed by going there without his late companions, and on no violent errand; or by the beautiful solitude in which he had passed the day, or by the thoughts that had come upon him,—but it seemed peopled by a legion of devils. This flight and pursuit, this cruel burning and destroying, these dreadful cries and stunning noises, were *they* the good lord's noble cause?

Though almost stupefied by the bewildering scene, still he found the blind man's house. It was shut up and tenantless. He waited for a long while, but no one came. At last he withdrew; and as he knew by this time that the soldiers were firing, and many people must have been killed, he went down into Holborn, where he heard the great crowd was, to try if he could find Hugh, and persuade him to avoid the danger, and return with him.

If he had been stunned and shocked before, his horror was increased a thousand-fold when he got into this vortex of the riot, and, not being an actor in the terrible spectacle, had it all before his eyes. But there, in the midst, towering above them all, close before the house they were attacking now, was Hugh on horseback, calling to the rest!

Sickened by the sights surrounding him on every side, and by the heat, and roar, and crash, he forced his way among the crowd (where many recognised him, and with shouts pressed back to let him pass), and in time was



nearly up with Hugh, who was savagely threatening some one, but whom, or what he said, he could not, in the great confusion, understand. At that moment the crowd forced their way into the house, and Hugh—it was impossible to see by what means in such a concourse—fell head-down.

Barnaby was beside him when he staggered to his feet. It was well he made him hear his voice, or Hugh, with his uplifted axe, would have cleft his skull in twain.

"Barnaby—you! Whose hand was that, that struck me down?"

"Not mine."

"Whose?—I say, whose?" he cried, reeling back, and looking wildly round. "What are we doing? Where is he? Show me!"

"You are hurt," said Barnaby—as indeed he was in the head, both by the blow he had received, and by his horse's hoof. "Come away with me."

As he spoke, he took the horse's bridle in his hand, turned him, and dragged Hugh several paces. This brought them out of the crowd, which was pouring from the street into the vintner's cellars.

"Where's—where's Dennis?" said Hugh, coming to a stop, and checking Barnaby with his strong arm. "Where has he been all day? What did he mean by leaving me as he did in the gaol last night? Tell me, you—d'ye hear?"

With a flourish of his dangerous weapon, he fell down upon the ground like a log. After a minute, though already frantic with drinking and with the wound in his head, he crawled to a stream of burning spirit which was pouring down the kennel, and began to drink at it as if it were a brook of water.

Barnaby drew him away and forced him to rise. Though he could neither stand nor walk, he involuntarily staggered to his horse, climbed upon his back, and clung there. After vainly attempting to divest the animal of his clanking trappings, Barnaby sprang up behind him, snatched the bridle, turned into Leather Lane, which was close at hand, and urged the frightened horse into a heavy trot.

He looked back once before he left the street; and looked upon a sight not easily to be erased, even from his remembrance, so long as he had life.

The vintner's house, with half-a-dozen others near at hand, was one great, glowing blaze. All night no one had essayed to quench the flames or stop their progress; but now a body of soldiers were actively engaged in pulling down two old wooden houses, which were every

moment in danger of taking fire, and which could scarcely fail, if they were left to burn, to extend the conflagration immensely. The tumbling down of nodding walls and heavy blocks of wood, the hooting and the execrations of the crowd, the distant firing of other military detachments, the distracted looks and cries of those whose habitations were in danger, the hurrying to and fro of frightened people with their goods; the reflections, in every quarter of the sky, of deep red, soaring flames, as though the last day had come, and the whole universe were burning; the dust, and smoke, and drift of fiery particles, scorching and kindling all it fell upon; the hot unwholesome vapour, the blight on everything; the stars, and moon, and very sky obliterated;—made up such a sum of dreariness and ruin, that it seemed as if the face of Heaven were blotted out, and night, in its rest and quiet, and softened light, never could look upon the earth again.

But there was a worse spectacle than this—worse by far than fire and smoke, or even the rabble's unappeasable and maniac rage. The gutters of the street, and every crack and fissure in the stones, ran with scorching spirit, which, being dammed up by busy hands, overflowed the road and pavement, and formed a great pool in which the people dropped down dead by dozens. They lay in heaps all round this fearful pond, husbands and wives, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, women with children in their arms and babies at their breasts, and drank until they died. While some stooped with their lips to the brink, and never raised their heads again, others sprang up from their fiery draught, and danced, half in mad triumph, and half in the agony of suffocation, until they fell, and steeped their corpses in the liquor that had killed them. Nor was even this the worst or most appalling kind of death that happened on this fatal night. From the burning cellars, where they drank out of hats, pails, buckets, tubs, and shoes, some men were drawn, alive, but all alight from head to foot; who, in their unendurable anguish and suffering, making for anything that had the look of water, rolled, hissing, in this hideous lake, and splashed up liquid fire, which lapped in all it met with as it ran along the surface, and neither spared the living nor the dead. On this last night of the great riots—for the last night it was—the wretched victims of a senseless outcry became themselves the dust and ashes of the flames they had kindled, and strewed the public streets of London.

With all he saw in this last glance fixed

indelibly upon his mind, Barnaby hurried from the city which enclosed such horrors; and holding down his head that he might not even see the glare of the fires upon the quiet landscape, was soon in the still country roads.

He stopped at about half a mile from the shed where his father lay, and with some difficulty making Hugh sensible that he must dismount, sunk the horse's furniture in a pool of stagnant water, and turned the animal loose. That done, he supported his companion as well as he could, and led him slowly forward.

## CHAPTER LXIX.

**I**T was the dead of night, and very dark, when Barnaby, with his stumbling comrade, approached the place where he had left his father; but he could see him stealing away into the gloom, distrustful even of him, and rapidly retreating. After calling to him twice or thrice that there was nothing to fear, but without effect, he suffered Hugh to sink upon the ground, and followed to bring him back.

He continued to creep away until Barnaby was close upon him; then turned, and said in a terrible, though suppressed voice:

"Let me go. Do not lay hands upon me. You have told her; and you and she together have betrayed me!"

Barnaby looked at him in silence.

"You have seen your mother!"

"No," cried Barnaby eagerly. "Not for a long time—longer than I can tell. A whole year, I think. Is she here?"

His father looked upon him steadfastly for a few moments, and then said—drawing nearer to him as he spoke, for, seeing his face, and hearing his words, it was impossible to doubt his truth:

"What man is that?"

"Hugh—Hugh. Only Hugh. You know him. *He* will not harm you. Why, you're afraid of Hugh! Ha, ha, ha! Afraid of gruff, old, noisy Hugh!"

"What man is he, I ask you?" he rejoined so fiercely that Barnaby stopped in his laugh, and shrinking back, surveyed him with a look of terrified amazement.

"Why, how stern you are! You make me fear you, though you are my father. Why do you speak to me so?"

"I want," he answered, putting away the hand which his son, with a timid desire to pro-

pitiate him, laid upon his sleeve,—“I want an answer, and you give me only jeers and questions. Who have you brought with you to this hiding-place, poor fool; and where is the blind man?”

“I don't know where. His house was close shut. I waited, but no person came; that was no fault of mine. This is Hugh—brave Hugh, who broke into that ugly gaol, and set us free. Aha! You like him now, do you? You like him now!”

“Why does he lie upon the ground?”

“He has had a fall, and has been drinking. The fields and trees go round, and round, and round with him, and the ground heaves under his feet. You know him? You remember? See!”

They had by this time returned to where he lay, and both stooped over him to look into his face.

“I recollect the man,” his father murmured.

“Why did you bring him here?”

“Because he would have been killed if I had left him over yonder. They were firing guns and shedding blood. Does the sight of blood turn you sick, father? I see it does by your face. That's like me.—What are you looking at?”

“At nothing!” said the murderer softly, as he started back a pace or two, and gazed with sunken jaw and staring eyes above his son's head. “At nothing!”

He remained in the same attitude and with the same expression on his face for a minute or more; then glanced slowly round as if he had lost something; and went shivering back towards the shed.

“Shall I bring him in, father?” asked Barnaby, who had looked on wondering.

He only answered with a suppressed groan, and lying down upon the ground, wrapped his cloak about his head, and shrunk into the darkest corner.

Finding that nothing would rouse Hugh now, or make him sensible for a moment, Barnaby dragged him along the grass, and laid him on a little heap of refuse hay and straw which had been his own bed; first having brought some water from a running stream hard by, and washed his wound, and laved his hands and face. Then he lay down himself, between the two, to pass the night; and, looking at the stars, fell fast asleep.

Awakened early in the morning by the sunshine and the songs of birds and hum of insects, he left them sleeping in the hut, and walked into the sweet and pleasant air. But he felt that on his jaded senses, oppressed and burdened with



the dreadful scenes of last night, and many nights before, all the beauties of opening day, which he had so often tasted, and in which he had had such deep delight, fell heavily. He thought of the blithe mornings when he and the dogs went bounding on together through the woods and fields; and the recollection filled his eyes with tears. He had no consciousness, God help him, of having done wrong, nor had he any new perception of the merits of the cause in which he had been engaged, or those of the men who advocated it; but he was full of cares now, and regrets, and dismal recollections, and wishes (quite unknown to him before) that this or that event had never happened, and that the sorrow and suffering of so many people had been spared. And now he began to think how happy they would be—his father, mother, he, and Hugh—if they rambled away together, and lived in some lonely place, where there were none of these troubles; and that perhaps the blind man, who had talked so wisely about gold, and told him of the great secrets he knew, could teach them how to live without being pinched by want. As this occurred to him, he was the more sorry that he had not seen him last night; and he was still brooding over this regret, when his father came and touched him on the shoulder.

“Ah!” cried Barnaby, starting from his fit of thoughtfulness. “Is it only you?”

“Who should it be?”

“I almost thought,” he answered, “it was the blind man. I must have some talk with him, father.”

“And so must I, for without seeing him, I don’t know where to fly or what to do, and lingering here is death. You must go to him again, and bring him here.”

“Must I?” cried Barnaby, delighted. “That’s brave, father. That’s what I want to do.”

“But you must bring only him, and none other. And though you wait at his door a whole day and night, still you must wait, and not come back without him.”

“Don’t you fear that,” he cried gaily. “He shall come, he shall come.”

“Trim off these gewgaws,” said his father, plucking the scraps of ribbon and the feathers from his hat, “and over your own dress wear my cloak. Take heed how you go, and they will be too busy in the streets to notice you. Of your coming back you need take no account, for he’ll manage that safely.”

“To be sure!” said Barnaby. “To be sure he will! A wise man, father, and one who can teach us to be rich! Oh! I know him, I know him!”

He was speedily dressed, and as well disguised as he could be. With a lighter heart he then set off upon his second journey, leaving Hugh, who was still in a drunken stupor, stretched upon the ground within the shed, and his father walking to and fro before it.

The murderer, full of anxious thoughts, looked after him, and paced up and down, disquieted by every breath of air that whispered among the boughs, and by every light shadow thrown by the passing clouds upon the daisied ground. He was anxious for his safe return, and yet, though his own life and safety hung upon it, felt a relief while he was gone. In the intense selfishness which the constant presence before him of his great crimes, and their consequences here and hereafter, engendered, every thought of Barnaby, as his son, was swallowed up and lost. Still, his presence was a torture and reproach; in his wild eyes there were terrible images of that guilty night; with his unearthly aspect, and his half-formed mind, he seemed to the murderer a creature who had sprung into existence from his victim’s blood. He could not bear his look, his voice, his touch; and yet he was forced, by his own desperate condition and his only hope of cheating the gibbet, to have him by his side, and to know that he was inseparable from his single chance of escape.

He walked to and fro, with little rest, all day, revolving these things in his mind; and still Hugh lay unconscious in the shed. At length, when the sun was setting, Barnaby returned, leading the blind man, and talking earnestly to him as they came along together.

The murderer advanced to meet them, and bidding his son go on and speak to Hugh, who had just then staggered to his feet, took his place at the blind man’s elbow, and slowly followed towards the shed.

“Why did you send *him*?” said Stagg. “Don’t you know it was the way to have him lost as soon as found?”

“Would you have had me come myself?” returned the other.

“Humph! Perhaps not. I was before the gaol on Tuesday night, but missed you in the crowd. I was out last night, too. There was good work last night—gay work—profitable work,” he added, rattling the money in his pockets.

“Have you——”

“—Seen your good lady? Yes.”

“Do you mean to tell me more, or not?”

“I’ll tell you all,” returned the blind man with a laugh. “Excuse me—but I love to see you so impatient. There’s energy in it.”

"Does she consent to say the word that may save me?"

"No," returned the blind man emphatically, as he turned his face towards him. "No. Thus it is. She has been at death's door since she lost her darling—has been insensible, and I know not what. I tracked her to a hospital, and presented myself (with your leave) at her bedside. Our talk was not a long one, for she was weak, and there being people near, I was not quite easy. But I told her all that you and I agreed upon, and pointed out the young gentleman's position in strong terms. She tried to soften me, but that, of course (as I told her), was lost time. She cried and moaned, you may be sure; all women do. Then, of a sudden, she found her voice and strength, and said that Heaven would help her and her innocent son; and that to Heaven she appealed against us—which she did; in really very pretty language, I assure you. I advised her, as a friend, not to count too much on assistance from any such distant quarter—recommended her to think of it—told her where I lived—said I knew she would send to me before noon next day—and left her either in a faint or shamming."

When he had concluded this narration, during which he had made several pauses, for the convenience of cracking and eating nuts, of which he seemed to have a pocketful, the blind man pulled a flask from his pocket, took a draught himself, and offered it to his companion.

"You won't, won't you?" he said, feeling that he pushed it from him. "Well! Then the gallant gentleman who's lodging with you will. Hallo, bully!"

"Death!" said the other, holding him back. "Will you tell me what I am to do?"

"Do! Nothing easier. Make a moonlight flitting in two hours' time with the young gentleman (he's quite ready to go; I have been giving him good advice as we came along), and get as far from London as you can. Let me know where you are, and leave the rest to me. She *must* come round; she can't hold out long; and as to the chances of your being retaken in the meanwhile, why it wasn't one man who got out of Newgate, but three hundred. Think of that for your comfort."

"We must support life. How?"

"How!" repeated the blind man. "By eating and drinking. And how get meat and drink, but by paying for it? Money!" he cried, slapping his pocket. "Is money the word? Why, the streets have been running money. Devil send that the sport's not over yet, for these are jolly times; golden, rare, roaring, scrambling

times. Hallo, bully! Hallo! Hallo! Drink, bully, drink. Where are ye there? Hallo!"

With such vociferations, and with a boisterous manner which bespoke his perfect abandonment to the general licence and disorder, he groped his way towards the shed, where Hugh and Barnaby were sitting on the ground.

"Put it about!" he cried, handing his flask to Hugh. "The kennels run with wine and gold. Guineas and strong water flow from the very pumps. About with it, don't spare it!"

Exhausted, unwashed, unshorn, begrimed with smoke and dust, his hair clotted with blood, his voice quite gone, so that he spoke in whispers; his skin parched up by fever, his whole body bruised and cut, and beaten about, Hugh still took the flask, and raised it to his lips. He was in the act of drinking, when the front of the shed was suddenly darkened, and Dennis stood before them.

"No offence, no offence," said that personage in a conciliatory tone, as Hugh stopped in his draught, and eyed him, with no pleasant look, from head to foot. "No offence, brother. Barnaby here too, eh? How are you, Barnaby? And two other gentlemen! Your humble servant, gentlemen. No offence to *you* either, I hope. Eh, brothers?"

Notwithstanding that he spoke in this very friendly and confident manner, he seemed to have considerable hesitation about entering, and remained outside the roof. He was rather better dressed than usual: wearing the same suit of threadbare black, it is true, but having round his neck an unwholesome-looking cravat of a yellowish white; and, on his hands, great leather gloves, such as a gardener might wear in following his trade. His shoes were newly greased, and ornamented with a pair of rusty iron buckles; the packthread at his knees had been renewed; and where he wanted buttons, he wore pins. Altogether, he had something the look of a tipstaff, or a bailiff's follower, desperately faded, but who had a notion of keeping up the appearance of a professional character, and making the best of the worst means.

"You're very snug here," said Mr. Dennis, pulling out a mouldy pocket-handkerchief, which looked like a decomposed halter, and wiping his forehead in a nervous manner.

"Not snug enough to prevent your finding us, it seems," Hugh answered sulkily.

"Why, I'll tell you what, brother," said Dennis with a friendly smile, "when you don't want me to know which way you're riding, you must wear another sort of bells on your horse. Ah! I know the sound of them you wore last night,



and have got quick ears for 'em ; that's the truth. Well, but how are you, brother ?”

He had by this time approached, and now ventured to sit down by him.

“How am I?” answered Hugh. “Where were you yesterday? Where did you go when you left me in the gaol? Why did you leave me? And what did you mean by rolling your eyes and shaking your fist at me, eh?”

“I shake my fist!—at you, brother!” said Dennis, gently checking Hugh's uplifted hand, which looked threatening.

“Your stick, then ; it's all one.”

“Lord love you, brother, I meant nothing. You don't understand me by half. I shouldn't wonder now,” he added in the tone of a desponding and an injured man, “but you thought, because I wanted them chaps left in the prison, that I was a-going to desert the banners?”

Hugh told him, with an oath, that he had thought so.

“Well!” said Mr. Dennis mournfully, “if you an't enough to make a man mistrust his feller-creturs, I don't know what is. Desert the



“NO OFFENCE, NO OFFENCE,” SAID THAT PERSONAGE IN A CONCILIATORY TONE, AS HUGH STOPPED IN HIS DRAUGHT, AND EYED HIM, WITH NO PLEASANT LOOK, FROM HEAD TO FOOT.

banners! Me! Ned Dennis, as was so christened by his own father!—Is this axe yourn, brother?”

Yes, it's mine,” said Hugh, in the same sullen manner as before; “it might have hurt you if you had come in its way once or twice last night. Put it down.”

“Might have hurt me!” said Mr. Dennis, still keeping it in his hand, and feeling the edge

with an air of abstraction. “Might have hurt me! and me exerting myself all the time to the very best advantage! Here's a world! And you're not a-going to ask me to take a sup out of that 'ere bottle, eh?”

Hugh passed it towards him. As he raised it to his lips, Barnaby jumped up, and motioning them to be silent, looked eagerly out.

“What's the matter, Barnaby?” said Dennis,

glancing at Hugh and dropping the flask, but still holding the axe in his hand.

"Hush!" he answered softly. "What do I see glittering behind the hedge?"

"What!" cried the hangman, raising his voice to its highest pitch, and laying hold of him and Hugh. "Not—not SOLDIERS, surely!"

That moment the shed was filled with armed men; and a body of horse, galloping into the field, drew up before it.

"There!" said Dennis, who remained untouched among them when they had seized their prisoners; "it's them two young ones, gentlemen, that the proclamation puts a price on. This other's an escaped felon.—I'm sorry for it, brother," he added in a tone of resignation, addressing himself to Hugh; "but you've brought it on yourself; you forced me to do it; you wouldn't respect the soundest constitutional principles, you know; you went and violated the very framework of society. I had sooner have given away a trifle in charity than done this, I would, upon my soul.—If you'll keep fast hold on 'em, gentlemen, I think I can make a shift to tie 'em better than you can."

But this operation was postponed for a few moments by a new occurrence. The blind man, whose ears were quicker than most people's sight, had been alarmed, before Barnaby, by a rustling in the bushes, under cover of which the soldiers had advanced. He retreated instantly—had hidden somewhere for a minute—and probably in his confusion mistaking the point at which he had emerged, was now seen running across the open meadow.

An officer cried directly that he had helped to plunder a house last night. He was loudly called on to surrender. He ran the harder, and in a few seconds would have been out of gunshot. The word was given, and the men fired.

There was a breathless pause and a profound silence, during which all eyes were fixed upon him. He had been seen to start at the discharge as if the report had frightened him. But he neither stopped nor slackened his pace in the least, and ran on full forty yards further. Then, without one reel or stagger, or sign of faintness, or quivering of any limb, he dropped.

Some of them hurried up to where he lay—the hangman with them. Everything had passed so quickly, that the smoke was not yet scattered, but curled slowly off in a little cloud, which seemed like the dead man's spirit moving solemnly away. There were a few drops of blood upon the grass—more when they turned him over—that was all.

"Look here! Look here!" said the hang-

man, stooping one knee beside the body, and gazing up with a disconsolate face at the officer and men. "Here's a pretty sight!"

"Stand out of the way," replied the officer. "Sergeant! see what he had about him."

The man turned his pockets out upon the grass, and counted, besides some foreign coins and two rings, five-and-forty guineas in gold. These were bundled up in a handkerchief and carried away; the body remained there for the present, but six men and the sergeant were left to take it to the nearest public-house.

"Now then, if you're going," said the sergeant, clapping Dennis on the back, and pointing after the officer, who was walking towards the shed.

To which Mr. Dennis only replied, "Don't talk to me!" and then repeated what he had said before, namely, "Here's a pretty sight!"

"It's not one that you care for much, I should think," observed the sergeant coolly.

"Why, who," said Mr. Dennis, rising, "should care for it, if I don't?"

"Oh! I didn't know you was so tender-hearted," said the sergeant. "That's all!"

"Tender-hearted!" echoed Dennis. "Tender-hearted! Look at this man. Do you call *this* constitutional? Do you see him shot through and through, instead of being worked off like a Briton? Damme if I know which party to side with. You're as bad as the other. What's to become of the country if the military power's to go a superseding the civilians in this way? Where's this poor fellow-creature's rights as a citizen, that he didn't have *me* in his last moments? I was here. I was willing. I was ready. These are nice times, brother, to have the dead crying out against us in this way, and sleep comfortably in our beds arterwards; wey nice."

Whether he derived any material consolation from binding the prisoners is uncertain; most probably he did. At all events, his being summoned to that work diverted him, for the time, from these painful reflections, and gave his thoughts a more congenial occupation.

They were not all three carried off together, but in two parties; Barnaby and his father going by one road in the centre of a body of foot; and Hugh, fast bound upon a horse, and strongly guarded by a troop of cavalry, being taken by another.

They had no opportunity for the least communication in the short interval which preceded their departure, being kept strictly apart. Hugh only observed that Barnaby walked with a dooping head among his guard, and, without rising his eyes, that he tried to wave his fettered hand



when he passed. For himself, he buoyed up his courage, as he rode along, with the assurance that the mob would force his gaol, wherever it might be, and set him at liberty. But when they got into London, and more especially into Fleet Market, lately the stronghold of the rioters, where the military were rooting out the last remnant of the crowd, he saw that this hope was gone, and felt that he was riding to his death.

## CHAPTER LXX.

**M**R. DENNIS, having dispatched this piece of business without any personal hurt or inconvenience, and having now retired into the tranquil respectability of private life, resolved to solace himself with half an hour or so of female society. With this amiable purpose in his mind, he bent his steps towards the house where Dolly and Miss Haredale were still confined, and whither Miss Miggs had also been removed by order of Mr. Simon Tappertit.

As he walked along the streets with his leather gloves clasped behind him, and his face indicative of cheerful thought and pleasant calculation, Mr. Dennis might have been likened unto a farmer ruminating among his crops, and enjoying by anticipation the bountiful gifts of Providence. Look where he would, some heap of ruins afforded him rich promise of a working off; the whole town appeared to have been ploughed, and sown, and nurtured by most genial weather; and a goodly harvest was at hand.

Having taken up arms, and resorted to deeds of violence, with the great main object of preserving the Old Bailey in all its purity, and the gallows in all its pristine usefulness and moral grandeur, it would perhaps be going too far to assert that Mr. Dennis had ever distinctly contemplated and foreseen this happy state of things. He rather looked upon it as one of those beautiful dispensations which are inscrutably brought about for the behoof and advantage of good men. He felt, as it were, personally referred to in this prosperous ripening for the gibbet; and had never considered himself so much the pet and favourite child of Destiny, or loved that lady so well, or with such a calm and virtuous reliance, in all his life.

As to being taken up himself for a rioter, and punished with the rest, Mr. Dennis dismissed that possibility from his thoughts as an idle

chimera; arguing that the line of conduct he had adopted at Newgate, and the service he had rendered that day, would be more than a set-off against any evidence which might identify him as a member of the crowd. That any charge of companionship which might be made against him by those who were themselves in danger would certainly go for nought. And that if any trivial indiscretion on his part should unluckily come out, the uncommon usefulness of his office at present, and the great demand for the exercise of its functions, would certainly cause it to be winked at and passed over. In a word, he had played his cards throughout with great care; had changed sides at the very nick of time; had delivered up two of the most notorious rioters, and a distinguished felon to boot; and was quite at his ease.

Saving—for there is a reservation; and even Mr. Dennis was not perfectly happy—saving for one circumstance; to wit, the forcible detention of Dolly and Miss Haredale in a house almost adjoining his own. This was a stumbling-block; for if they were discovered and released, they could, by the testimony they had it in their power to give, place him in a situation of great jeopardy; and to set them at liberty, first extorting from them an oath of secrecy and silence, was a thing not to be thought of. It was more, perhaps, with an eye to the danger which lurked in this quarter than from his abstract love of conversation with the sex, that the hangman, quickening his steps, now hastened into their society, cursing the amorous natures of Hugh and Mr. Tappertit with great heartiness at every step he took.

When he entered the miserable room in which they were confined, Dolly and Miss Haredale withdrew in silence to the remotest corner. But Miss Miggs, who was particularly tender of her reputation, immediately fell upon her knees and began to scream very loud, crying, "What will become of me?"—"Where is my Simmuns?"—"Have mercy, good gentleman, on my sex's weaknesses!"—with other doleful lamentations of that nature, which she delivered with great propriety and decorum.

"Miss, miss," whispered Dennis, beckoning to her with his forefinger, "come here—I won't hurt you. Come here, my lamb, will you?"

On hearing this tender epithet, Miss Miggs, who had left off screaming when he opened his lips, and had listened to him attentively, began again: crying, "Oh, I'm his lamb! He says I'm his lamb! Oh gracious, why wasn't I born old and ugly? Why was I ever made to be the youngest of six, and all of 'em dead and in their

blessed graves, excepting one married sister, which is settled in Golden Lion Court, number twenty-sivin, second bell-handle on the——!"

"Don't I say I an't a-going to hurt you?" said Dennis, pointing to a chair. "Why, miss, what's the matter?"

"I don't know what mayn't be the matter!" cried Miggs, clasping her hands distractedly. "Anything may be the matter!"

"But nothing is, I tell you," said the hang-

man. "First stop that noise, and come and sit down here, will you, chuckey?"

The coaxing tone in which he said these latter words might have failed in its object, if he had not accompanied them with sundry sharp jerks of his thumb over one shoulder, and with divers winks and thrustings of his tongue into his cheek, from which signals the damsel gathered that he sought to speak to her apart concerning Miss Haredale and Dolly. Her curiosity being



"TENDER-HEARTED!" ECHOED DENNIS. "TENDER-HEARTED! LOOK AT THIS MAN. DO YOU CALL THIS CONSTITOOTIONAL? DO YOU SEE HIM SHOT THROUGH AND THROUGH, INSTEAD OF BEING WORKED OFF LIKE A BRITON? DAMME IF I KNOW WHICH PARTY TO SIDE WITH."

very powerful, and her jealousy by no means inactive, she arose, and with a great deal of shivering and starting back, and much muscular action among all the small bones in her throat, gradually approached him.

"Sit down," said the hangman.

Suiting the action to the word, he thrust her rather suddenly and prematurely into a chair; and designing to reassure her by a little harmless jocularly, such as is adapted to please and fascinate the sex, converted his right forefinger into an ideal bradawl or gimlet, and made as though he would screw the same into her side

—whereat Miss Miggs shrieked again, and evinced symptoms of faintness.

"Lovey, my dear," whispered Dennis, drawing his chair close to hers, "when was your young man here last, ch?"

"My young man, good gentleman!" answered Miggs in a tone of exquisite distress.

"Ah! Simmuns, you know—him?" said Dennis.

"Mine indeed!" cried Miggs with a burst of bitterness—and as she said it, she glanced towards Dolly. "Mine, good gentleman!"



This was just what Mr. Dennis wanted and expected.

"Ah!" he said, looking so soothingly, not to say amorously, on Miggs, that she sat, as she afterwards remarked, on pins and needles of the sharpest Whitechapel kind, not knowing what intentions might be suggesting that expression to his features. "I was afraid of that. I saw as much myself. It's her fault. She *will* entice 'em."

"I wouldn't," cried Miggs, folding her hands and looking upwards with a kind of devout blankness, "I wouldn't lay myself out as she does; I wouldn't be as bold as her; I wouldn't seem to say to all male creatures, 'Come and kiss me'"—and here a shudder quite convulsed her frame—"for any earthly crowns as might be offered. Worlds," Miggs added solemnly, "should not reduce me. No. Not if I was Wenus."

"Well, but you *are* Wenus, you know," said Mr. Dennis confidentially.

"No, I am not, good gentleman," answered Miggs, shaking her head with an air of self-denial which seemed to imply that she might be if she chose, but she hoped she knew better. "No, I am not, good gentleman. Don't charge me with it."

Up to this time she had turned round, every now and then, to where Dolly and Miss Haredale had retired, and uttered a scream or groan, or laid her hand upon her heart and trembled excessively, with a view of keeping up appearances, and giving them to understand that she conversed with the visitor under protest and on compulsion, and at a great personal sacrifice, for their common good. But, at this point, Mr. Dennis looked so very full of meaning, and gave such a singularly expressive twitch to his face as a request to her to come still nearer to him, that she abandoned these little arts, and gave him her whole and undivided attention.

"When was Simmuns here, I say?" quoth Dennis in her ear.

"Not since yesterday morning; and then only for a few minutes. Not all day, the day before."

"You know he meant all along to carry off that one?" said Dennis, indicating Dolly by the slightest possible jerk of his head;—"and to hand you over to somebody else."

Miss Miggs, who had fallen into a terrible state of grief when the first part of this sentence was spoken, recovered a little at the second, and seemed, by the sudden check she put upon her tears, to intimate that possibly this arrangement might meet her views; and that it might, perhaps, remain an open question.

"—But unfort'nately," pursued Dennis, who observed this: "somebody else was fond of her too, you see; and even if he wasn't, somebody else is took for a rioter, and it's all over with him."

Miss Miggs relapsed.

"Now, I want," said Dennis, "to clear this house, and to see you righted. What if I was to get her off out of the way, eh?"

Miss Miggs, brightening again, rejoined, with many breaks and pauses from excess of feeling, that temptations had been Simmuns's bane. That it was not his faults, but hers (meaning Dolly's). That men did not see through these dreadful arts as women did, and therefore was caged and trapped, as Simmun had been. That she had no personal motives to serve—far from it—on the contrary, her intentions was good towards all parties. But forasmuch as she knowed that Simmun, if united to any designing and artful minxes (she would name no names, for that was not her dispositions)—to *any* designing and artful minxes—must be made miserable and unhappy for life, she *did* incline towards preventions. Such, she added, was her free confessions. But as this was private feelings, and might perhaps be looked upon as vengeance, she begged the gentleman would say no more. Whatever he said, wishing to do her duty by all mankind, even by them as had ever been her bitterest enemies, she would not listen to him. With that she stopped her ears, and shook her head from side to side, to intimate to Mr. Dennis that though he talked until he had no breath left, she was as deaf as any adder.

"Lookee here, my sugar-stick," said Mr. Dennis; "if your view's the same as mine, and you'll only be quiet and slip away at the right time, I can have the house clear to-morrow, and be out of this trouble.—Stop, though! there's the other."

"Which other, sir?" asked Miggs—still with her fingers in her ears and her head shaking obstinately.

"Why, the tallest one yonder," said Dennis, as he stroked his chin, and added, in an undertone to himself, something about not crossing Muster Gashford.

Miss Miggs replied (still being profoundly deaf), that if Miss Haredale stood in the way at all, he might make himself quite easy on that score; as she had gathered, from what passed between Hugh and Mr. Tappertit when they were last there, that she was to be removed alone (not by them, but by somebody else) to-morrow night.

Mr. Dennis opened his eyes very wide at this

piece of information, whistled once, considered once, and finally slapped his head once and nodded once, as if he had got the clue to this mysterious removal, and so dismissed it. Then he imparted his design concerning Dolly to Miss Miggs, who was taken more deaf than before, when he began; and so remained all through.

The notable scheme was this. Mr. Dennis was immediately to seek out, from among the rioters, some daring young fellow (and he had one in his eye, he said), who, terrified by the threats he could hold out to him, and alarmed by the capture of so many who were no better and no worse than he, would gladly avail himself of any help to get abroad, and out of harm's way, with his plunder, even though his journey were encumbered by an unwilling companion; indeed, the unwilling companion being a beautiful girl, would probably be an additional inducement and temptation. Such a person found, he proposed to bring him there on the ensuing night, when the tall one was taken off, and Miss Miggs had purposely retired; and then that Dolly should be gagged, muffled in a cloak, and carried in any handy conveyance down to the river's side; where there were abundant means of getting her smuggled snugly off in any small craft of doubtful character, and no questions asked. With regard to the expense of this removal, he would say, at a rough calculation, that two or three silver tea or coffee pots, with something additional for drink (such as a muffineer or toast-rack), would more than cover it. Articles of plate of every kind having been buried by the rioters in several lonely parts of London, and particularly, as he knew, in St. James's Square, which, though easy of access, was little frequented after dark, and had a convenient piece of water in the midst, the needful funds were close at hand, and could be had upon the shortest notice. With regard to Dolly, the gentleman would exercise his own discretion. He would be bound to do nothing but to take her away, and keep her away. All other arrangements and dispositions would rest entirely with himself.

If Miss Miggs had had her hearing, no doubt she would have been greatly shocked by the delicacy of a young female's going away with a stranger by night (for her moral feelings, as we have said, were of the tenderest kind); but, directly Mr. Dennis ceased to speak, she reminded him that he had only wasted breath. She then went on to say (still with her fingers in her ears) that nothing less than a severe practical lesson would save the locksmith's daughter

from utter ruin; and that she felt it, as it were, a moral obligation, and a sacred duty to the family, to wish that some one would devise one for her reformation. Miss Miggs remarked, and very justly, as an abstract sentiment which happened to occur to her at the moment, that she dared to say the locksmith and his wife would murmur and repine, if they were ever, by forcible abduction or otherwise, to lose their child; but that we seldom knew, in this world, what was best for us: such being our sinful and imperfect natures, that very few arrived at that clear understanding.

Having brought their conversation to this satisfactory end, they parted: Dennis to pursue his design, and take another walk about his farm: Miss Miggs to launch, when he left her, into such a burst of mental anguish (which she gave them to understand was occasioned by certain tender things he had had the presumption and audacity to say), that little Dolly's heart was quite melted. Indeed, she said and did so much to soothe the outraged feelings of Miss Miggs, and looked so beautiful while doing so, that if that young maid had not had ample vent for her surpassing spite, in a knowledge of the mischief that was brewing, she must have scratched her features on the spot.

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## CHAPTER LXXI.

**A**LL next day, Emma Haredale, Dolly, and Miggs remained cooped up together in what had now been their prison for so many days, without seeing any person, or hearing any sound but the murmured conversation, in an outer room, of the men who kept watch over them. There appeared to be more of these fellows than there had been hitherto; and they could no longer hear the voices of women, which they had before plainly distinguished. Some new excitement, too, seemed to prevail among them; for there was much stealthy going in and out, and a constant questioning of those who were newly arrived. They had previously been quite reckless in their behaviour; often making a great uproar; quarrelling among themselves, fighting, dancing, and singing. They were now very subdued and silent, conversing almost in whispers, and stealing in and out with a soft and stealthy tread, very different from the boisterous trampling in which their arrivals and



departures had hitherto been announced to the trembling captives.

Whether this change was occasioned by the presence among them of some person of authority in their ranks, or by any other cause, they were unable to decide. Sometimes they thought it was in part attributable to there being a sick man in the chamber, for last night there had been a shuffling of feet, as though a burden were brought in, and afterwards a moaning noise. But they had no means of ascertaining the truth: for any question or entreaty on their parts only provoked a storm of execrations, or something worse; and they were too happy to be left alone, unassailed by threats or admiration, to risk even that comfort by any voluntary communication with those who held them in durance.

It was sufficiently evident, both to Emma and to the locksmith's poor little daughter herself, that she, Dolly, was the great object of attraction; and that, so soon as they should have leisure to indulge in the softer passion, Hugh and Mr. Tappetit would certainly fall to blows for her sake; in which latter case it was not very difficult to foresee whose prize she would become. With all her old horror of that man revived, and deepened into a degree of aversion and abhorrence which no language can describe; with a thousand old recollections and regrets, and causes of distress, anxiety, and fear, besetting her on all sides; poor Dolly Varden—sweet, blooming, buxom Dolly—began to hang her head, and fade, and droop like a beautiful flower. The colour fled from her cheeks, her courage forsook her, her gentle heart failed. Unmindful of all her provoking caprices, forgetful of all her conquests and inconstancy, with all her winning little vanities quite gone, she nestled all the livelong day in Emma Haredale's bosom; and, sometimes calling on her dear old grey-haired father, sometimes on her mother, and sometimes even on her old home, pined slowly away like a poor bird in its cage.

Light hearts, light hearts, that float so gaily on a smooth stream, that are so sparkling and buoyant in the sunshine—down upon fruit, bloom upon flowers, blush in summer air, life of the winged insect, whose whole existence is a day—how soon ye sink in troubled water! Poor Dolly's heart—a little, gentle, idle, fickle thing; giddy, restless, fluttering; constant to nothing but bright looks, and smiles, and laughter—Dolly's heart was breaking.

Emma had known grief, and could bear it better. She had little comfort to impart, but she could soothe and tend her, and she did so; and Dolly clung to her like a child to its nurse.

In endeavouring to inspire her with some fortitude, she increased her own; and though the nights were long, and the days dismal, and she felt the wasting influence of watching and fatigue, and had perhaps a more defined and clear perception of their destitute condition and its worst dangers, she uttered no complaint. Before the ruffians, in whose power they were, she bore herself so calmly, and with such an appearance, in the midst of all her terror, of a secret conviction that they dare not harm her, that there was not a man among them but held her in some degree of dread; and more than one believed she had a weapon hidden in her dress, and was prepared to use it.

Such was their condition when they were joined by Miss Miggs, who gave them to understand that she too had been taken prisoner because of her charms, and detailed such feats of resistance she had performed (her virtue having given her supernatural strength), that they felt it quite a happiness to have her for a champion. Nor was this the only comfort they derived at first from Miggs's presence and society: for that young lady displayed such resignation and long-suffering, and so much meek endurance, under her trials, and breathed in all her chaste discourse a spirit of such holy confidence and resignation, and devout belief that all would happen for the best, that Emma felt her courage strengthened by the bright example; never doubting but that everything she said was true, and that she, like them, was torn from all she loved, and agonised by doubt and apprehension. As to poor Dolly, she was roused, at first, by seeing one who came from home; but when she heard under what circumstances she had left it, and into whose hands her father had fallen, she wept more bitterly than ever, and refused all comfort.

Miss Miggs was at some trouble to reprove her for this state of mind, and to entreat her to take example by herself, who, she said, was now receiving back, with interest, tenfold the amount of her subscriptions to the red-brick dwelling-house, in the articles of peace of mind and a quiet conscience. And, while on serious topics, Miss Miggs considered it her duty to try her hand at the conversion of Miss Haredale; for whose improvement she launched into a polemical address of some length, in the course whereof she likened herself unto a chosen missionary, and that young lady to a cannibal in darkness. Indeed, she returned so often to these subjects, and so frequently called upon them to take a lesson from her,—at the same time vaunting, and, as it were, rioting in, her huge unworthi-

ness and abundant excess of sin,—that, in the course of a short time, she became, in that small chamber, rather a nuisance than a comfort, and rendered them, if possible, even more unhappy than they had been before.

The night had now come; and for the first time (for their gaolers had been regular in bringing food and candles), they were left in darkness. Any change in their condition in such a place inspired new fears; and when some hours had passed, and the gloom was still unbroken, Emma could no longer repress her alarm.

They listened attentively. There was the same murmuring in the outer room, and now and then a moan which seemed to be wrung from a person in great pain, who made an effort to subdue it, but could not. Even these men seemed to be in darkness too; for no light shone through the chinks in the door, nor were they moving, as their custom was, but quite still: the silence being unbroken by so much as the creaking of a board.

At first Miss Miggs wondered greatly in her own mind who this sick person might be; but arriving, on second thoughts, at the conclusion that he was a part of the schemes on foot, and an artful device soon to be employed with great success, she opined, for Miss Haredale's comfort, that it must be some misguided Papist who had been wounded: and this happy supposition encouraged her to say, under her breath, "Ally Looyer!" several times.

"Is it possible," said Emma with some indignation, "that you who have seen these men committing the outrages you have told us of, and who have fallen into their hands like us, can exult in their cruelties?"

"Personal considerations, miss," rejoined Miggs, "sinks into nothing afore a noble cause. Ally Looyer! Ally Looyer! Ally Looyer, good gentlemen!"

It seemed, from the shrill pertinacity with which Miss Miggs repeated this form of acclamation, that she was calling the same through the keyhole of the door; but in the profound darkness she could not be seen.

"If the time has come—Heaven knows it may come at any moment—when they are bent on prosecuting the designs, whatever they may be, with which they have brought us here, can you still encourage and take part with them?" demanded Emma.

"I thank my goodness-gracious-blessed-stars I can, miss," returned Miggs with increased energy. "Ally Looyer, good gentlemen!"

Even Dolly, cast down and disappointed as

she was, revived at this, and bade Miggs hold her tongue directly.

"Which, was you pleased to observe, Miss Varsen?" said Miggs, with a strong emphasis on the irrelative pronoun.

Dolly repeated her request.

"Ho, gracious me!" cried Miggs with hysterical derision. Ho, gracious me! Yes, to be sure I will. Ho yes! I am a abject slave, and a toiling, moiling, constant-working, always-being-found-fault-with, never-giving-satisfactions, nor'-having-no-time-to-clean-oneself, potter's wessel—an't I, miss? Ho yes! My situations is lowly, and my capacities is limited, and my duties is to humble myself afore the base degenerating daughters of their blessed mothers as is fit to keep companies with holy saints but is born to persecutions from wicked relations—and to demean myself before them as is no better than Infidels—an't it, miss? Ho yes! My only becoming occupations is to help young flaunting pagins to brush and comb and titiwate theirselves into whitening and suppulchres, and leave the young men to think that there an't a bit of padding in it nor no pinching ins nor fillings out nor pomatums nor deceits nor earthly wanities—an't it, miss? Yes, to be sure it is—ho yes!"

Having delivered these ironical passages with a most wonderful volubility, and with a shrillness perfectly deafening (especially when she jerked out the interjections), Miss Miggs, from mere habit, and not because weeping was at all appropriate to the occasion, which was one of triumph, concluded by bursting into a flood of tears, and calling in an impassioned manner on the name of Simmuns.

What Emma Haredale and Dolly would have done, or how long Miss Miggs, now that she had hoisted her true colours, would have gone on waving them before their astonished senses, it is impossible to tell. Nor is it necessary to speculate on these matters, for a startling interruption occurred at that moment, which took their whole attention by storm.

This was a violent knocking at the door of the house, and then its sudden bursting open; which was immediately succeeded by a scuffle in the room without, and the clash of weapons. Transported with the hope that rescue had at length arrived, Emma and Dolly shrieked aloud for help; nor were their shrieks unanswered; for after a hurried interval, a man, bearing in one hand a drawn sword, and in the other a taper, rushed into the chamber where they were confined.

It was some check upon their transport to find in this person an entire stranger, but they



appealed to him, nevertheless, and besought him, in impassioned language, to restore them to their friends.

"For what other purpose am I here?" he answered, closing the door, and standing with his back against it. "With what object have I made my way to this place, through difficulty and danger, but to preserve you?"

With a joy for which it was impossible to find adequate expression, they embraced each other, and thanked Heaven for this most timely aid. Their deliverer stepped forward for a moment to put the light upon the table, and immediately returning to his former position against the door, bared his head, and looked on smilingly.

"You have news of my uncle, sir?" said Emma, turning hastily towards him.

"And of my father and mother?" added Dolly.

"Yes," he said. "Good news."

"They are alive and unhurt?" they both cried at once.

"Yes, and unhurt," he rejoined.

"And close at hand?"

"I did not say close at hand," he answered smoothly; "they are at no great distance. *Your* friends, sweet one," he added, addressing Dolly, "are within a few hours' journey. You will be restored to them, I hope, to-night."

"My uncle, sir——" faltered Emma.

"Your uncle, dear Miss Haredale, happily—I say happily, because he has succeeded where many of our creed have failed, and is safe—has crossed the sea, and is out of Britain."

"I thank God for it," said Emma faintly.

"You say well. You have reason to be thankful: greater reason than it is possible for you, who have seen but one night of these cruel outrages, to imagine."

"Does he desire," said Emma, "that I should follow him?"

"Do you ask if he desires it?" cried the stranger in surprise. "If he desires it! But you do not know the danger of remaining in England, the difficulty of escape, or the price hundreds will pay to secure the means, when you make that inquiry. Pardon me. I had forgotten that you could not, being prisoner here."

"I gather, sir," said Emma after a moment's pause, "from what you hint at, but fear to tell me, that I have witnessed but the beginning, and the least, of the violence to which we are exposed, and that it has not yet slackened in its fury?"

He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, lifted up his hands; and with the same smooth smile, which was not a pleasant one to see, cast his eyes upon the ground, and remained silent.

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"You may venture, sir, to speak plain," said Emma, "and to tell me the worst. We have undergone some preparation for it."

But here Dolly interposed, and entreated her not to hear the worst, but the best; and besought the gentleman to tell them the best, and to keep the remainder of his news until they were safe among their friends again.

"It is told in three words," he said, glancing at the locksmith's daughter with a look of some displeasure. "The people have risen, to a man, against us; the streets are filled with soldiers, who support them and do their bidding. We have no protection but from above, and no safety but in flight; and that is a poor resource; for we are watched on every hand, and detained here both by force and fraud. Miss Haredale, I cannot bear—believe me, that I cannot bear—by speaking of myself, or what I have done, or am prepared to do, to seem to vaunt my services before you. But, having powerful Protestant connections, and having my whole wealth embarked with theirs in shipping and commerce, I happily possessed the means of saving your uncle. I have the means of saving you; and in redemption of my sacred promise, made to him, I am here; pledged not to leave you until I have placed you in his arms. The treachery or penitence of one of the men about you led to the discovery of your place of confinement; and that I have forced my way here, sword in hand, you see."

"You bring," said Emma, faltering, "some note or token from my uncle?"

"No, he doesn't," cried Dolly, pointing at him earnestly: "now I am sure he doesn't. Don't go with him for the world!"

"Hush, pretty fool—be silent," he replied, frowning angrily upon her. "No, Miss Haredale, I have no letter, nor any token of any kind; for while I sympathise with you, and such as you, on whom misfortune so heavy and so undeserved has fallen, I value my life. I carry, therefore, no writing which, found upon me, would lead to its certain loss. I never thought of bringing any other token, nor did Mr. Haredale think of intrusting me with one—possibly because he had good experience of my faith and honesty, and owed his life to me."

There was a reproof conveyed in these words, which, to a nature like Emma Haredale's, was well addressed. But Dolly, who was differently constituted, was by no means touched by it, and still conjured her, in all the terms of affection and attachment she could think of, not to be lured away.

"Time presses," said their visitor, who,

although he sought to express the deepest interest, had something cold and even in his speech, that grated on the ear; "and danger surrounds us. If I have exposed myself to it in vain, let it be so; but if you and he should ever meet again, do me justice. If you decide to remain (as I think you do), remember, Miss Haredale, that I left you with a solemn caution, and acquitting myself of all the consequences to which you expose yourself."

"Stay, sir!" cried Emma—"one moment, I beg you. Cannot we"—and she drew Dolly closer to her—"cannot we go together?"

"The task of conveying one female in safety through such scenes as we must encounter, to say nothing of attracting the attention of those who crowd the streets," he answered, "is enough. I have said that she will be restored to her friends to-night. If you accept the service I tender, Miss Haredale, she shall be instantly placed in safe conduct, and that promise redeemed. Do you decide to remain? People of all ranks and creeds are flying from the town, which is sacked from end to end. Let me be of use in some quarter. Do you stay, or go?"

"Dolly," said Emma in a hurried manner, "my dear girl, this is our last hope. If we part now, it is only that we may meet again in happiness and honour. I will trust to this gentleman."

"No—no—no!" cried Dolly, clinging to her. "Pray, pray do not!"

"You hear," said Emma, "that to-night—only to-night—within a few hours—think of that!—you will be among those who would die of grief to lose you, and who are now plunged in the deepest misery for your sake. Pray for me, dear girl, as I will for you; and never forget the many quiet hours we have passed together. Say one 'God bless you!' Say that at parting!"

But Dolly could say nothing; no, not when Emma kissed her cheek a hundred times, and covered it with tears, could she do more than hang upon her neck, and sob, and clasp, and hold her tight.

"We have time for no more of this," cried the man, unclenching her hands, and pushing her roughly off, as he drew Emma Haredale towards the door. "Now! Quick, outside there! Are you ready?"

"Ay!" cried a loud voice, which made him start. "Quite ready! Stand back here, for your lives!"

And in an instant he was felled like an ox in the butcher's shambles—struck down as though a block of marble had fallen from the roof and crushed him—and cheerful light and beaming

faces came pouring in—and Emma was clasped in her uncle's embrace, and Dolly, with a shriek that pierced the air, fell into the arms of her father and mother.

What fainting there was, what laughing, what crying, what sobbing, what smiling, how much questioning, no answering, all talking together, all beside themselves with joy; what kissing, congratulating, embracing, shaking of hands, and falling into all these raptures over and over and over again; no language can describe.

At length, and after a long time, the old locksmith went up and fairly hugged two strangers, who had stood apart and left them to themselves; and then they saw—whom? Yes, Edward Chester and Joseph Willet.

"See here!" cried the locksmith. "See here! Where would any of us have been without these two? Oh, Mr. Edward, Mr. Edward—oh, Joe, Joe, how light, and yet how full you have made my old heart to-night!"

"It was Mr. Edward that knocked him down, sir," said Joe. "I longed to do it, but I gave it up to him. Come, you brave and honest gentleman! Get your senses together, for you haven't long to lie here."

He had his foot upon the breast of their sham deliverer, in the absence of a spare arm; and gave him a gentle roll as he spoke. Gashford, for it was no other, crouching, yet malignant, raised his scowling face, like sin subdued, and pleaded to be gently used.

"I have access to all my lord's papers, Mr. Haredale," he said in a submissive voice: Mr. Haredale keeping his back towards him, and not once looking round: "there are very important documents among them. There are a great many in secret drawers, and distributed in various places, known only to my lord and me. I can give some very valuable information, and render important assistance to any inquiry. You will have to answer it if I receive ill-usage."

"Pah!" cried Joe in deep disgust. "Get up, man; you're waited for outside. Get up, do you hear?"

Gashford slowly rose; and picking up his hat, and looking with a baffled malevolence, yet with an air of despicable humility, all round the room, crawled out.

"And now, gentlemen," said Joe, who seemed to be the spokesman of the party, for all the rest were silent; "the sooner we get back to the Black Lion the better, perhaps."

Mr. Haredale nodded assent, and drawing his niece's arm through his, and taking one of her hands between his own, passed out straightway; followed by the locksmith, Mrs. Varden,



and Dolly—who would scarcely have presented a sufficient surface for all the hugs and caresses they bestowed upon her, though she had been a dozen Dollys. Edward Chester and Joe followed.

And did Dolly never once look behind—no once? Was there not one little fleeting glimpse of the dark eyelash, almost resting on her flushed cheek, and of the downcast sparkling eye it shaded? Joe thought there was—and he is not likely to have been mistaken; for there were not many eyes like Dolly's, that's the truth.

The outer room, through which they had to pass, was full of men; among them, Mr. Dennis, in safe keeping; and there had been, since yesterday, lying in hiding behind a wooden screen which was now thrown down, Simon Tappetit, the recreant 'prentice, burnt and bruised, and with a gun-shot wound in his body; and his legs—his perfect legs, the pride and glory of his life, the comfort of his whole existence—crushed into shapeless ugliness. Wondering no longer at the moans they had heard, Dolly crept closer to her father, and shuddered at the sight: but neither bruises, burns, nor gun-shot wound, nor all the torture of his shattered limbs, sent half so keen a pang to Simon's breast as Dolly passing out, with Joe for her preserver.

A coach was ready at the door, and Dolly found herself safe and whole inside, between her father and mother, with Emma Haredale and her uncle, quite real, sitting opposite. But there was no Joe, no Edward; and they had said nothing. They had only bowed once, and kept at a distance. Dear heart! what a long way it was to the Black Lion!

## CHAPTER LXXII.



THE Black Lion was so far off, and occupied such a length of time in the getting at, that notwithstanding the strong presumptive evidence she had about her of the late events being real and of actual occurrence, Dolly could not divest herself of the belief that she must be in a dream which was lasting all night. Nor was she quite certain that she saw and heard with her own proper senses, even when the coach, in the fulness of time, stopped at the Black Lion, and the host of that tavern approached in a gush of cheerful light to help them to dismount, and give them hearty welcome.

There too, at the coach door, one on one side, one upon the other, were already Edward Chester and Joe Willet, who must have followed

in another coach: and this was such a strange and unaccountable proceeding, that Dolly was the more inclined to favour the idea of her being fast asleep. But when Mr. Willet appeared—old John himself—so heavy-headed and obstinate, and with such a double chin as the liveliest imagination could never in its boldest flights have conjured up in all its vast proportions—then she stood corrected, and unwillingly admitted to herself that she was broad awake.

And Joe had lost an arm—he—that well-made, handsome, gallant fellow! As Dolly glanced towards him, and thought of the pain he must have suffered, and the far-off places in which he had been wandering, and wondered who had been his nurse, and hoped that, whoever it was, she had been as kind and gentle and considerate as she would have been, the tears came rising to her bright eyes one by one, little by little, until she could keep them back no longer, and so, before them all, wept bitterly.

"We are all safe now, Dolly," said her father kindly. "We shall not be separated any more. Cheer up, my love, cheer up!"

The locksmith's wife knew better, perhaps, than he, what ailed her daughter. But Mrs. Varden being quite an altered woman—for the riots had done that good—added her word to his, and comforted her with similar representations.

"Mayhap," said Mr. Willet, senior, looking round upon the company, "she's hungry. That's what it is, depend upon it—I am myself."

The Black Lion, who, like old John, had been waiting supper past all reasonable and conscionable hours, hailed this as a philosophical discovery of the profoundest and most penetrating kind; and the table being already spread, they sat down to supper straightway.

The conversation was not of the liveliest nature, nor were the appetites of some among them very keen. But, in both these respects, old John more than atoned for any deficiency on the part of the rest, and very much distinguished himself.

It was not in point of actual conversation that Mr. Willet shone so brilliantly, for he had none of his old cronies to "tackle," and was rather timorous of venturing on Joe; having certain vague misgivings within him that he was ready on the shortest notice, and on receipt of the slightest offence, to fell the Black Lion to the floor of his own parlour, and immediately withdraw to China or some other remote and unknown region, there to dwell for evermore, or at least until he had got rid of his remaining arm and both legs, and perhaps an eye or so into the bargain. It was with a peculiar kind of

pantomime that Mr. Willet filled up every pause ; and in this he was considered by the Black Lion, who had been his familiar for some years, quite to surpass and go beyond himself, and outrun the expectations of his most admiring friends.

The subject that worked in Mr. Willet's mind, and occasioned these demonstrations, was no other than his son's bodily disfigurement, which he had never yet got himself thoroughly to believe or comprehend. Shortly after their first meeting, he had been observed to wander, in a state of great perplexity, to the kitchen, and to direct his gaze towards the fire, as if in search of his usual adviser in all matters of doubt and difficulty. But there being no boiler at the Black Lion, and the rioters having so beaten and battered his own that it was quite unfit for further service, he wandered out again in a perfect bog of uncertainty and mental confusion, and in that state took the strangest means of resolving his doubts : such as feeling the sleeve of his son's great-coat, as deeming it possible that his arm might be there ; looking at his own arms and those of everybody else, as if to assure himself that two and not one was the usual allowance ; sitting by the hour together in a brown study, as if he were endeavouring to recall Joe's image in his younger days, and to remember whether he really had in those times one arm or a pair ; and employing himself in many other speculations of the same kind.

Finding himself at this supper, surrounded by faces with which he had been so well acquainted in old times, Mr. Willet recurred to the subject with uncommon vigour ; apparently resolved to understand it now or never. Sometimes, after every two or three mouthfuls, he laid down his knife and fork, and stared at his son with all his might—particularly at his maimed side ; then, he looked slowly round the table until he caught some person's eye, when he shook his head with great solemnity, patted his shoulder, winked, or as one may say—for winking was a very slow process with him—went to sleep with one eye for a minute or two ; and so, with another solemn shaking of his head, took up his knife and fork again, and went on eating. Sometimes he put his food into his mouth abstractedly, and, with all his faculties concentrated on Joe, gazed at him in a fit of stupefaction as he cut his meat with one hand, until he was recalled to himself by symptoms of choking on his own part, and was by that means restored to consciousness. At other times he resorted to such small devices as asking him for the salt, the pepper, the vinegar, the mustard—anything that was on his maimed

side—and watching him as he handed it. By dint of these experiments, he did at last so satisfy and convince himself, that, after a longer silence than he had yet maintained, he laid down his knife and fork on either side his plate, drank a long draught from a tankard beside him (still keeping his eyes on Joe), and, leaning backward in his chair and fetching a long breath, said, as he looked all round the board :

"It's been took off!"

"By George!" said the Black Lion, striking the table with his hand, "he's got it!"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Willet, with the look of a man who felt that he had earned a compliment, and deserved it. "That's where it is. It's been took off."

"Tell him where it was done," said the Black Lion to Joe.

"At the defence of the Savannah, father."

"At the defence of the Salwanners," repeated Mr. Willet softly, again looking round the table.

"In America, where the war is," said Joe.

"In America, where the war is," repeated Mr. Willet. "It was took off in the defence of the Salwanners in America where the war is." Continuing to repeat these words to himself in a low tone of voice (the same information had been conveyed to him, in the same terms, at least fifty times before), Mr. Willet arose from table, walked round to Joe, felt his empty sleeve all the way up, from the cuff to where the stump of his arm remained ; shook his hand ; lighted his pipe at the fire, took a long whiff, walked to the door, turned round once when he had reached it, wiped his left eye with the back of his forefinger, and said, in a faltering voice : "My son's arm—was took off—at the defence of the—Salwanners—in America—where the war is"—with which words he withdrew, and returned no more that night.

Indeed, on various pretences, they all withdrew one after another, save Dolly, who was left sitting there alone. It was a great relief to be alone, and she was crying to her heart's content, when she heard Joe's voice at the end of the passage, bidding somebody good night.

Good night ! Then he was going elsewhere—to some distance, perhaps. To what kind of home *could* he be going, now that it was so late ?

She heard him walk along the passage, and pass the door. But there was a hesitation in his footsteps. He turned back—Dolly's heart beat high—he looked in.

"Good night !"—he didn't say Dolly, but there was comfort in his not saying Miss Varden.



"Good night!" sobbed Dolly.

"I am sorry you take on so much for what is past and gone," said Joe kindly. "Don't. I can't bear to see you do it. Think of it no longer. You are safe and happy now."

Dolly cried the more.

"You must have suffered very much within these few days—and yet you're not changed, unless it's for the better. They said you were, but I don't see it. You were—you were always very beautiful," said Joe, "but you are more beautiful than ever now. You are indeed. There



"I SHALL BLESS YOUR NAME," SOBBED THE LOCKSMITH'S LITTLE DAUGHTER, "AS LONG AS I LIVE."

can be no harm in my saying so, for you must know it. You are told so very often, I am sure."

As a general principle, Dolly *did* know it, and *was* told so very often. But the coachmaker had turned out, years ago, to be a special don-

key; and whether she had been afraid of making similar discoveries in others, or had grown by dint of long custom to be careless of compliments generally, certain it is that although she cried so much, she was better pleased to be told so now than ever she had been in all her life.

"I shall bless your name," sobbed the locksmith's little daughter, "as long as I live. I shall never hear it spoken without feeling as if my heart would burst. I shall remember it in my prayers every night and morning till I die!"

"Will you?" said Joe eagerly. "Will you indeed? It makes me—well, it makes me very glad and proud to hear you say so."

Dolly still sobbed, and held her handkerchief to her eyes. Joe still stood looking at her.

"Your voice," said Joe, "brings up old times so pleasantly, that, for the moment, I feel as if that night—there can be no harm in talking of that night now—had come back, and nothing had happened in the meantime. I feel as if I hadn't suffered any hardships, but had knocked down poor Tom Cobb only yesterday, and had come to see you with my bundle on my shoulder before running away.—You remember?"

Remember! But she said nothing. She raised her eyes for an instant. It was but a glance; a little, tearful, timid glance. It kept Joe silent, though, for a long time.

"Well!" he said stoutly, "it was to be otherwise, and was. I have been abroad, fighting all the summer, and frozen up all the winter, ever since. I have come back as poor in purse as I went, and crippled for life besides. But, Dolly, I would rather have lost this other arm—ay, I would rather have lost my head—than have come back to find you dead, or anything but what I always pictured you to myself, and what I always hoped and wished to find you. Thank God for all!"

Oh, how much, and how keenly, the little coquette of five years ago felt now! She had found her heart at last. Never having known its worth till now, she had never known the worth of his. How priceless it appeared!

"I did hope once," said Joe in his homely way, "that I might come back a rich man, and marry you. But I was a boy then, and have long known better than that. I am a poor, maimed, discharged soldier, and must be content to rub through life as I can. I can't say, even now, that I shall be glad to see you married, Dolly; but I *am* glad—yes, I am, and glad to think I can say so—to know that you are admired and courted, and can pick and choose for a happy life. It's a comfort to me to know that you'll talk to your husband about me; and I hope the time will come when I may be able to like him, and to shake hands with him, and to come and see you as a poor friend who knew you when you were a girl. God bless you!"

His hand *did* tremble; but, for all that, he took it away again, and left her.

## CHAPTER LXXIII.

**B**Y this Friday night—for it was on Friday in the riot week that Emma and Dolly were rescued by the timely aid of Joe and Edward Chester—the disturbances were entirely quelled, and peace and order were restored to the affrighted city. True, after what had happened, it was impossible for any man to say how long this better state of things might last, or how suddenly new outrages, exceeding even those so lately witnessed, might burst forth, and fill its streets with ruin and bloodshed; for this reason, those who had fled from the recent tumults still kept at a distance, and many families, hitherto unable to procure the means of flight, now availed themselves of the calm, and withdrew into the country. The shops, too, from Tyburn to White-chapel, were still shut; and very little business was transacted in any of the places of great commercial resort. But notwithstanding, and in spite of the melancholy forebodings of that numerous class of society who see with the greatest clearness into the darkest perspectives, the town remained profoundly quiet. The strong military force disposed in every advantageous quarter, and stationed at every commanding point, held the scattered fragments of the mob in check; the search after rioters was prosecuted with unrelenting vigour; and if there were any among them so desperate and reckless as to be inclined, after the terrible scenes they had beheld, to venture forth again, they were so daunted by these resolute measures, that they quickly shrunk into their hiding-places, and had no thought but for their personal safety.

In a word, the crowd was utterly routed. Upwards of two hundred had been shot dead in the streets. Two hundred and fifty more were lying, badly wounded, in the hospitals; of whom seventy or eighty died within a short time afterwards. A hundred were already in custody, and more were taken every hour. How many perished in the conflagrations, or by their own excesses, is unknown; but that numbers found a terrible grave in the hot ashes of the flames they had kindled, or crept into vaults and cellars to drink in secret or to nurse their sores, and never saw the light again, is certain. When the embers of the fires had been black and cold for many weeks, the labourers' spades proved this beyond a doubt.

Seventy-two private houses and four strong gaols were destroyed in the four great days of



these riots. The total loss of property, as estimated by the sufferers, was one hundred and fifty-five thousand pounds; at the lowest and least partial estimate of disinterested persons, it exceeded one hundred and twenty-five thousand pounds. For this immense loss, compensation was soon afterwards made out of the public purse, in pursuance of a vote of the House of Commons; the sum being levied on the various wards in the City, on the county, and the borough of Southwark. Both Lord Mansfield and Lord Saville, however, who had been great sufferers, refused to accept of any compensation whatever.

The House of Commons, sitting on Tuesday with locked and guarded doors, had passed a resolution to the effect that, as soon as the tumults subsided, it would immediately proceed to consider the petitions presented from many of his Majesty's Protestant subjects, and would take the same into its serious consideration. While this question was under debate, Mr. Herbert, one of the members present, indignantly rose and called upon the House to observe that Lord George Gordon was then sitting under the gallery with the blue cockade, the signal of rebellion, in his hat. He was not only obliged, by those who sat near, to take it out; but offering to go into the street to pacify the mob with the somewhat indefinite assurance that the House was prepared to give them "the satisfaction they sought," was actually held down in his seat by the combined force of several members. In short, the disorder and violence which reigned triumphant out of doors, penetrated into the senate, and there, as elsewhere, terror and alarm prevailed, and ordinary forms were for the time forgotten.

On the Thursday, both Houses had adjourned until the following Monday se'nnight, declaring it impossible to pursue their deliberations with the necessary gravity and freedom while they were surrounded by armed troops. And now that the rioters were dispersed, the citizens were beset with a new fear; for, finding the public thoroughfares and all their usual places of resort filled with soldiers intrusted with the free use of fire and sword, they began to lend a greedy ear to the rumours which were afloat of martial law being declared, and to dismal stories of prisoners having been seen hanging on lamp-posts in Cheapside and Fleet Street. These terrors being promptly dispelled by a Proclamation declaring that all the rioters in custody would be tried by a special commission in due course of law, a fresh alarm was engendered by its being whispered abroad that French money had been found on some of the rioters, and that the dis-

turbances had been fomented by foreign powers who sought to compass the overthrow and ruin of England. This report, which was strengthened by the diffusion of anonymous handbills, but which, if it had any foundation at all, probably owed its origin to the circumstance of some few coins which were not English money having been swept into the pockets of the insurgents with other miscellaneous booty, and afterwards discovered on the prisoners or the dead bodies, caused a great sensation; and men's minds being in that excited state when they are most apt to catch at any shadow of apprehension, was bruited about with much industry.

All remaining quiet, however, during the whole of this Friday, and on this Friday night, and no new discoveries being made, confidence began to be restored, and the most timid and desponding breathed again. In Southwark no fewer than three thousand of the inhabitants formed themselves into a watch, and patrolled the streets every hour. Nor were the citizens slow to follow so good an example: and it being the manner of peaceful men to be very bold when the danger is over, they were abundantly fierce and daring; not scrupling to question the stoutest passenger with great severity, and carrying it with a very high hand over all errand-boys, servant-girls, and 'prentices.

As day deepened into evening, and darkness crept into the nooks and corners of the town as if it were mustering in secret, and gathering strength to venture into the open ways, Barnaby sat in his dungeon, wondering at the silence, and listening in vain for the noise and outcry which had ushered in the night of late. Beside him, with his hand in hers, sat one in whose companionship he felt at peace. She was worn and altered, full of grief, and heavy-hearted; but the same to him.

"Mother," he said after a long silence: "how long,—how many days and nights,—shall I be kept here?"

"Not many, dear. I hope not many."

"You hope! Ay, but your hoping will not undo these chains. I hope, but they don't mind that. Grip hopes, but who cares for Grip?"

The raven gave a short, dull, melancholy croak. It said "Nobody" as plainly as a croak could speak.

"Who cares for Grip, excepting you and me?" said Barnaby, smoothing the bird's rumpled feathers with his hand. "He never speaks in this place; he never says a word in gaol; he sits and mopes all day in this dark corner, dozing sometimes, and sometimes looking at the light that creeps in through the bars, and shines

in his bright eye as if a spark from those great fires had fallen into the room and was burning yet. But who cares for Grip?"

The raven croaked again—Nobody.

"And by the way," said Barnaby, withdrawing his hand from the bird, and laying it upon his mother's arm, as he looked eagerly in her face; "if they kill me—they may: I heard it said they would—what will become of Grip when I am dead?"

The sound of the word, or the current of his own thoughts, suggested to Grip his old phrase "Never say die!" But he stopped short in the middle of it, drew a dismal cork, and subsided into a faint croak, as if he lacked the heart to get through the shortest sentence.

"Will they take *his* life as well as mine?" said Barnaby. "I wish they would. If you and I and he could die together, there would be none to feel sorry, or to grieve for us. But do what they will, I don't fear them, mother!"

"They will not harm you," she said, her tears choking her utterance. "They never will harm you when they know all. I am sure they never will."

"Oh! Don't you be too sure of that," cried Barnaby, with a strange pleasure in the belief that she was self-deceived, and in his own sagacity. "They have marked me, mother, from the first. I heard them say so to each other when they brought me to this place last night; and I believe them. Don't you cry for me. They said that I was bold, and so I am, and so I will be. You may think that I am silly, but I can die as well as another.—I have done no harm, have I?" he added quickly.

"None before Heaven," she answered.

"Why then," said Barnaby, "let them do their worst. You told me once—you—when I asked you what death meant, that it was nothing to be feared, if we did no harm. Aha! mother, you thought I had forgotten that!"

His merry laugh and playful manner smote her to the heart. She drew him closer to her, and besought him to talk to her in whispers, and to be very quiet, for it was getting dark, and their time was short, and she would soon have to leave him for the night.

"You will come to-morrow?" said Barnaby.

Yes. And every day. And they would never part again.

He joyfully replied that this was well, and what he wished, and what he had felt quite certain she would tell him; and then he asked her where she had been so long, and why she had not come to see him when he was a great soldier, and ran through the wild schemes he had had

for their being rich and living prosperously, and, with some faint notion in his mind that she was sad and he had made her so, tried to console and comfort her, and talked of their former life and his old sports and freedom: little dreaming that every word he uttered only increased her sorrow, and that her tears fell faster at the freshened recollection of their lost tranquillity.

"Mother," said Barnaby as they heard the man approaching to close the cells for the night, "when I spoke to you just now about my father you cried 'Hush!' and turned away your head. Why did you do so? Tell me why in a word. You thought *he* was dead. You are not sorry that he is alive and has come back to us? Where is he? Here?"

"Do not ask any one where he is, or speak about him," she made answer.

"Why not?" said Barnaby. "Because he is a stern man, and talks roughly? Well! I don't like him, or want to be with him by myself; but why not speak about him?"

"Because I am sorry that he is alive; sorry that he has come back; and sorry that he and you have ever met. Because, dear Barnaby, the endeavour of my life has been to keep you two asunder."

"Father and son asunder! Why?"

"He has," she whispered in his ear, "he has shed blood. The time has come when you must know it. He has shed the blood of one who loved him well, and trusted him, and never did him wrong in word or deed."

Barnaby recoiled in horror, and glancing at his stained wrist for an instant, wrapped it, shuddering, in his dress.

"But," she added hastily as the key turned in the lock, "and although we shun him, he is your father, dearest, and I am his wretched wife. They seek his life, and he will lose it. It must not be by our means; nay, if we could win him back to penitence, we should be bound to love him yet. Do not seem to know him, except as one who fled with you from the gaol, and if they question you about him, do not answer them. God be with you through the night, dear boy! God be with you!"

She tore herself away, and in a few seconds Barnaby was alone. He stood for a long time rooted to the spot, with his face hidden in his hands; then flung himself, sobbing, upon his miserable bed.

But the moon came slowly up in all her gentle glory, and the stars looked out, and through the small compass of the grated window, as through the narrow crevice of one good deed in a murky life of guilt, the face of Heaven shone bright and



merciful. He raised his head; gazed upward at the quiet sky, which seemed to smile upon the earth in sadness, as if the night, more thoughtful than the day, looked down in sorrow on the sufferings and evil deeds of men; and felt its peace sink deep into his heart. He, a poor idiot, caged in his narrow cell, was as much lifted up to God, while gazing on the mild light, as the freest and most favoured man in all the spacious city; and in his ill-remembered prayer, and in the fragment of the childish hymn, with which he sung and crooned himself asleep, there breathed as true a spirit as ever studied homily expressed, or old cathedral arches echoed.

As his mother crossed a yard on her way out, she saw, through a grated door which separated it from another court, her husband, walking round and round, with his hands folded on his breast, and his head hung down. She asked the man who conducted her if she might speak a word with this prisoner. Yes, but she must be quick, for he was locking up for the night, and there was but a minute or so to spare. Saying this, he unlocked the door, and bade her go in.

It grated harshly as it turned upon its hinges, but he was deaf to the noise, and still walked round and round the little court, without raising his head or changing his attitude in the least. She spoke to him, but her voice was weak, and failed her. At length she put herself in his track, and when he came near, stretched out her hand and touched his.

He started backward, trembling from head to foot; but seeing who it was, demanded why she came there. Before she could reply, he spoke again.

"Am I to live or die? Do you do murder too, or spare?"

"My son—our son," she answered, "is in this prison."

"What is that to me?" he cried, stamping impatiently on the stone pavement. "I know it. He can no more aid me than I can aid him. If you are come to talk of him, begone!"

As he spoke he resumed his walk, and hurried round the court as before. When he came again to where she stood, he stopped and said,

"Am I to live or die? Do you repent?"

"Oh! do *you*?" she answered. "Will you, while time remains? Do not believe that I could save you, if I dared."

"Say if you would," he answered with an oath, as he tried to disengage himself and pass on. "Say if you would."

"Listen to me for one moment," she returned;

"for but a moment. I am but newly risen from a sick bed, from which I never hoped to rise again. The best among us think, at such a time, of good intentions half performed and duties left undone. If I have ever, since that fatal night, omitted to pray for your repentance before death—if I omitted, even then, anything which might tend to urge it on you when the horror of your crime was fresh—if, in our later meeting, I yielded to the dread that was upon me, and forgot to fall upon my knees and solemnly adjure you, in the name of him you sent to his account with Heaven, to prepare for the retribution which must come, and which is stealing on you now—I humbly before you, and in the agony of supplication in which you see me, beseech that you will let me make atonement."

"What is the meaning of your canting words?" he answered roughly. "Speak so that I may understand you."

"I will," she answered; "I desire to. Bear with me for a moment more. The hand of Him who set his curse on murder is heavy on us now. You cannot doubt it. Our son, our innocent boy, on whom His anger fell before his birth, is in this place in peril of his life—brought here by your guilt; yes, by that alone, as Heaven sees and knows, for he has been led astray in the darkness of his intellect, and that is the terrible consequence of your crime."

"If you come, woman-like, to load me with reproaches——" he muttered, again endeavouring to break away.

"—I do not. I have a different purpose. You must hear it. If not to-night, to-morrow; if not to-morrow, at another time. You *must* hear it. Husband, escape is hopeless—impossible."

"You tell me so, do you?" he said, raising his manacled hand, and shaking it. "You!"

"Yes," she said with indescribable earnestness. "But why?"

"To make me easy in this gaol. To make the time 'twixt this and death pass pleasantly. For my good—yes, for my good, of course," he said, grinding his teeth, and smiling at her with a livid face.

"Not to load you with reproaches," she replied; "not to aggravate the tortures and miseries of your condition, not to give you one hard word, but to restore you to peace and hope. Husband, dear husband, if you will but confess this dreadful crime; if you will but implore forgiveness of Heaven and of those whom you have wronged on earth; if you will dismiss these vain uneasy thoughts, which never can be realised, and will rely on Penitence and on the Truth, I

promise you, in the great name of the Creator, whose image you have defaced, that He will comfort and console you. And for myself," she cried, clasping her hands and looking upward, "I swear before Him, as He knows my heart and reads it now, that from that hour I will love and cherish you as I did of old, and watch you night and day in the short interval that will remain to us, and soothe you with my truest love and duty, and pray with you, that one threatening judgment may be arrested, and that our boy may be spared to bless God, in his poor way, in the free air and light!"

He fell back and gazed at her while she poured out these words, as though he were for a moment awed by her manner, and knew not what to do. But anger and fear soon got the mastery of him, and he spurned her from him.

"Begone!" he cried. "Leave me! You plot, do you? You plot to get speech with me, and let them know I am the man they say I am. A curse on you and on your boy!"

"On him the curse has already fallen," she replied, wringing her hands.

"Let it fall heavier. Let it fall on one and all. I hate you both. The worst has come to me. The only comfort that I seek, or I can have, will be the knowledge that it comes to you. Now go!"

She would have urged him gently, even then, but he menaced her with his chain.

"I say go—I say it for the last time. The gallows has me in its grasp, and it is a black phantom that may urge me on to something more. Begone! I curse the hour that I was born, the man I slew, and all the living world!"

In a paroxysm of wrath, and terror, and the fear of death, he broke from her, and rushed into the darkness of his cell, where he cast himself jangling down upon the stone floor, and smote it with his iron hands. The man returned to lock the dungeon door, and having done so, carried her away.

On that warm, balmy night in June there were glad faces and light hearts in all quarters of the town, and sleep, banished by the late horrors, was doubly welcomed. On that night families made merry in their houses, and greeted each other on the common danger they had escaped; and those who had been denounced ventured into the streets; and they who had been plundered got good shelter. Even the timorous Lord Mayor, who was summoned that night before the Privy Council to answer for his conduct, came back contented; observing to all his friends that he had got off very well with a reprimand, and repeating with huge satisfaction

his memorable defence before the Council, "that such was his temerity, he thought death would have been his portion."

On that night, too, more of the scattered remnants of the mob were traced to their lurking-places, and taken; and in the hospitals, and deep among the ruins they had made, and in the ditches and the fields, many unshrouded wretches lay dead: envied by those who had been active in the disturbances, and who pillowed their doomed heads in the temporary gaols.

And in the Tower, in a dreary room whose thick stone walls shut out the hum of life, and made a stillness which the records left by former prisoners with those silent witnesses seemed to deepen and intensify; remorseful for every act that had been done by every man among the cruel crowd; feeling for the time their guilt his own, and their lives put in peril by himself; and finding, amidst such reflections, little comfort in fanaticism, or in his fancied call; sat the unhappy author of all—Lord George Gordon.

He had been made prisoner that evening. "If you are sure it's me you want," he said to the officer, who waited outside with the warrant for his arrest on a charge of High Treason, "I am ready to accompany you"—which he did without resistance. He was conducted first before the Privy Council, and afterwards to the Horse Guards, and then was taken by way of Westminster Bridge, and back over London Bridge (for the purpose of avoiding the main streets), to the Tower, under the strongest guard ever known to enter its gates with a single prisoner.

Of all his forty thousand men, not one remained to bear him company. Friends, dependants, followers,—none were there. His fawning secretary had played the traitor; and he whose weakness had been goaded and urged on by so many for their own purposes, was desolate and alone.

#### CHAPTER LXXIV.

**M**R. DENNIS, having been made prisoner late in the evening, was removed to a neighbouring round-house for that night, and carried before a justice for examination on the next day, Saturday. The charges against him being numerous and weighty, and it being in particular proved, by the testimony of Gabriel Varden, that he had shown a special desire to take his life, he was committed for trial. Moreover, he was honoured with the distinction of being considered a chief among



the insurgents, and received from the magistrate's lips the complimentary assurance that he was in a position of imminent danger, and would do well to prepare himself for the worst.

To say that Mr. Dennis's modesty was not somewhat startled by these honours, or that he was altogether prepared for so flattering a reception, would be to claim for him a greater amount of stoical philosophy than even he possessed. Indeed, this gentleman's stoicism was of that not uncommon kind which enables a man to bear with exemplary fortitude the afflictions of his friends, but renders him, by way of counterpoise, rather selfish and sensitive in respect of any that happen to befall himself. It is, therefore, no disparagement to the great officer in question to state, without disguise or concealment, that he was at first very much alarmed, and that he betrayed divers emotions of fear, until his reasoning powers came to his relief, and set before him a more hopeful prospect.

In proportion as Mr. Dennis exercised these intellectual qualities with which he was gifted, in reviewing his best chances of coming off handsomely and with small personal inconvenience, his spirits rose, and his confidence increased. When he remembered the great estimation in which his office was held, and the constant demand for his services; when he bethought himself how the Statute Book regarded him as a kind of Universal Medicine applicable to men, women, and children, of every age and variety of criminal constitution; and how high he stood, in his official capacity, in the favour of the Crown and both Houses of Parliament, the Mint, the Bank of England, and the Judges of the land; when he recollected that, whatever ministry was in or out, he remained their peculiar pet and panacea, and that for his sake England stood single and conspicuous among the civilised nations of the earth: when he called these things to mind, and dwelt upon them, he felt certain that the national gratitude *must* relieve him from the consequences of his late proceedings, and would certainly restore him to his old place in the happy social system.

With these crumbs, or, as one may say, with these whole loaves of comfort to regale upon, Mr. Dennis took his place among the escort that awaited him, and repaired to gaol with a manly indifference. Arriving at Newgate, where some of the ruined cells had been hastily fitted up for the safe keeping of rioters, he was warmly received by the turnkeys, as an unusual and interesting case, which agreeably relieved their monotonous duties. In this spirit he was fettered

with great care, and conveyed into the interior of the prison.

"Brother," cried the hangman, as, following an officer, he traversed under these novel circumstances the remains of passages with which he was well acquainted, "am I going to be along with anybody?"

"If you'd have left more walls standing, you'd have been alone," was the reply. "As it is, we're cramped for room, and you'll have company."

"Well," returned Dennis, "I don't object to company, brother. I rather like company. I was formed for society, I was."

"That's rather a pity, ain't it?" said the man.

"No," answered Dennis, "I'm not aware that it is. Why should it be a pity, brother?"

"Oh! I don't know," said the man carelessly. "I thought that was what you meant. Being formed for society, and being cut off in your flower, you know——"

"I say," interposed the other quickly, "what are you talking of? Don't. Who's a-going to be cut off in their flowers?"

"Oh! nobody particular. I thought you was, perhaps," said the man.

Mr. Dennis wiped his face, which had suddenly grown very hot, and remarking, in a tremulous voice, to his conductor that he had always been fond of his joke, followed him in silence until he stopped at a door.

"This is my quarters, is it?" he asked facetiously.

"This is the shop, sir," replied his friend.

He was walking in, but not with the best possible grace, when he suddenly stopped, and started back.

"Halloa!" said the officer. "You're nervous."

"Nervous!" whispered Dennis in great alarm. "Well I may be. Shut the door."

"I will when you're in," returned the man.

"But I can't go in there," whispered Dennis. "I can't be shut up with that man. Do you want me to be throttled, brother?"

The officer seemed to entertain no particular desire on the subject one way or other, but briefly remarking that he had his orders, and intended to obey them, pushed him in, turned the key, and retired.

Dennis stood trembling with his back against the door, and involuntarily raising his arm to defend himself, stared at a man, the only other tenant of the cell, who lay, stretched at his full length, upon a stone bench, and who paused in his deep breathing as if he were about to wake. But he rolled over on one side, let his arm fall

negligently down, drew a long sigh, and murmuring indistinctly, fell fast asleep again.

Relieved in some degree by this, the hangman took his eyes for an instant from the slumbering figure, and glanced round the cell in search of

some vantage-ground or weapon of defence. There was nothing movable within it but a clumsy table which could not be displaced without noise, and a heavy chair. Stealing on tiptoe towards this latter piece of furniture, he retired



"SAT THE UNHAPPY AUTHOR OF ALL—LORD GEORGE GORDON."

with it into the remotest corner, and entrenching himself behind it, watched the enemy with the utmost vigilance and caution.

The sleeping man was Hugh; and perhaps it was not unnatural for Dennis to feel in a state of very uncomfortable suspense, and to wish with his whole soul that he might never wake again. Tired of standing, he crouched down in his

corner after some time, and rested on the cold pavement; but although Hugh's breathing still proclaimed that he was sleeping soundly, he could not trust him out of his sight for an instant. He was so afraid of him, and of some sudden onslaught, that he was not content to see his closed eyes through the chair-back, but every now and then rose stealthily to his feet,



and peered at him with outstretched neck, to assure himself that he really was still asleep, and was not about to spring upon him when he was off his guard.

He slept so long and so soundly, that Mr. Dennis began to think he might sleep on until the turnkey visited them. He was congratulating himself upon these promising appearances, and blessing his stars with much fervour, when one or two unpleasant symptoms manifested themselves: such as another motion of the arm, another sigh, a restless tossing of the head. Then, just as it seemed that he was about to fall heavily to the ground from his narrow bed, Hugh's eyes opened.

It happened that his face was turned directly towards his unexpected visitor. He looked lazily at him for some half-dozen seconds without any aspect of surprise or recognition; then suddenly jumped up, and with a great oath pronounced his name.

"Keep off, brother, keep off!" cried Dennis, dodging behind the chair. "Don't do me a mischief. I'm a prisoner like you. I haven't the free use of my limbs. I'm quite an old man. Don't hurt me!"

He whined out the last three words in such piteous accents, that Hugh, who had dragged away the chair, and aimed a blow at him with it, checked himself, and bade him get up.

"I'll get up certainly, brother," cried Dennis, anxious to propitiate him by any means in his power; "I'll comply with any request of yours, I'm sure. There—I'm up now. What can I do for you? Only say the word, and I'll do it."

"What can you do for me?" cried Hugh, clutching him by the collar with both hands, and shaking him as though he were bent on stopping his breath by that means. "What have you done for me?"

"The best. The best that could be done," returned the hangman.

Hugh made him no answer, but shaking him in his strong gripe until his teeth chattered in his head, cast him down upon the floor, and flung himself on the bench again.

"If it wasn't for the comfort it is to me to see you here," he muttered, "I'd have crushed your head against it; I would."

It was some time before Dennis had breath enough to speak, but, as soon as he could resume his propitiatory strain, he did so.

"I did the best that could be done, brother," he whined; "I did indeed. I was forced with two bayonets and I don't know how many bullets on each side of me, to point you out. If you hadn't been taken, you'd have been shot;

and what a sight that would have been—a fine young man like you!"

"Will it be a better sight now?" asked Hugh, raising his head, with such a fierce expression, that the other durst not answer him just then.

"A deal better," said Dennis meekly after a pause. "First, there's all the chances of the law, and they're five hundred strong. We may get off scot-free. Unlikelier things than that have come to pass. Even if we shouldn't, and the chances fail, we can but be worked off once: and when it's well done, it's so neat, so skilful, so captivating, if that don't seem too strong a word, that you'd hardly believe it could be brought to such perfection. Kill one's fellow-creeturs off with muskets!—Pah!" and his nature so revolted at the bare idea, that he spat upon the dungeon pavement.

His warming on this topic, which, to one unacquainted with his pursuits and tastes, appeared like courage; together with his artful suppression of his own secret hopes, and mention of himself as being in the same condition with Hugh; did more to soothe that ruffian than the most elaborate arguments could have done, or the most abject submission. He rested his arms upon his knees, and stooping forward, looked from beneath his shaggy hair at Dennis, with something of a smile upon his face.

"The fact is, brother," said the hangman in a tone of greater confidence, "that you got into bad company. The man that was with you was looked after more than you, and it was him I wanted. As to me, what have I got by it? Here we are, in one and the same plight."

"Lookee, rascal," said Hugh, contracting his brows; "I'm not altogether such a shallow blade but I know you expected to get something by it, or you wouldn't have done it. But it's done, and you're here, and it will soon be all over with you and me; and I'd as soon die as live, or live as die. Why should I trouble myself to have revenge on you? To eat, and drink, and go to sleep, as long as I stay here, is all I care for. If there was but a little more sun to bask in than can find its way into this cursed place, I'd lie in it all day, and not trouble myself to sit or stand up once. That's all the care I have for myself. Why should I care for you?"

Finishing this speech with a growl like the yawn of a wild beast, he stretched himself upon the bench again, and closed his eyes once more.

After looking at him in silence for some moments, Dennis, who was greatly relieved to find him in this mood, drew the chair towards his rough couch, and sat down near him—taking

the precaution, however, to keep out of the range of his brawny arm.

"Well said, brother; nothing could be better said," he ventured to observe. "We'll eat and drink of the best, and sleep our best, and make the best of it every way. Anything can be got for money. Let's spend it merrily."

"Ay," said Hugh, coiling himself into a new position.—"Where is it?"

"Why, they took mine from me at the lodge," said Mr. Dennis; "but mine's a peculiar case."

"Is it? They took mine too."

"Why, then, I tell you what, brother," Dennis began. "You must look up your friends——"

"My friends!" cried Hugh, starting up and resting on his hands. "Where are my friends?"

"Your relations, then," said Dennis.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Hugh, waving one arm above his head. "He talks of friends to me—talks of relations to a man whose mother died the death in store for her son, and left him, a hungry brat, without a face he knew in all the world! He talks of this to me!"

"Brother," cried the hangman, whose features underwent a sudden change, "you don't mean to say——"

"I mean to say," Hugh interposed, "that they hung her up at Tyburn. What was good enough for her is good enough for me. Let them do the like by me as soon as they please—the sooner the better. Say no more to me. I'm going to sleep."

"But I want to speak to you; I want to hear more about that," said Dennis, changing colour.

"If you're a wise man," growled Hugh, raising his head to look at him with a frown, "you'll hold your tongue. I tell you I'm going to sleep."

Dennis venturing to say something more in spite of this caution, the desperate fellow struck at him with all his force, and missing him, lay down again with many muttered oaths and imprecations, and turned his face towards the wall. After two or three ineffectual twitches at his dress, which he was hardy enough to venture upon, notwithstanding his dangerous humour, Mr. Dennis, who burnt, for reasons of his own, to pursue the conversation, had no alternative but to sit as patiently as he could, waiting his further pleasure.

## CHAPTER LXXV.



A MONTH has elapsed,—and we stand in the bedchamber of Sir John Chester. Through the half-opened window, the Temple Garden looks green and pleasant; the placid river, gay with boat and barge, and dimpled with the plash of many an oar, sparkles in the distance; the sky is blue and clear; and the summer air steals gently in, filling the room with perfume. The very town, the smoky town, is radiant. High roofs and steeple-tops, wont to look black and sullen, smile a cheerful grey; every old gilded vane, and ball, and cross glitters anew in the bright morning sun; and, high among them all, St. Paul's towers up, showing its lofty crest in burnished gold.

Sir John was breakfasting in bed. His chocolate and toast stood upon a little table at his elbow; books and newspapers lay ready to his hand upon the coverlet; and, sometimes pausing to glance with an air of tranquil satisfaction round the well-ordered room, and sometimes to gaze indolently at the summer sky, he ate, and drank, and read the news luxuriously.

The cheerful influence of the morning seemed to have some effect even upon his equable temper. His manner was unusually gay; his smile more placid and agreeable than usual; his voice more clear and pleasant. He laid down the newspaper he had been reading; leaned back upon his pillow with the air of one who resigned himself to a train of charming recollections; and, after a pause, soliloquised as follows:

"And my friend the centaur goes the way of his mamma! I am not surprised. And his mysterious friend Mr. Dennis likewise! I am not surprised. And my old postman, the exceedingly free-and-easy young madman of Chigwell! I am quite rejoiced. It's the very best thing that could possibly happen to him."

After delivering himself of these remarks, he fell again into his smiling train of reflection; from which he roused himself at length to finish his chocolate, which was getting cold, and ring the bell for more.

The new supply arriving, he took the cup from his servant's hand; and saying, with a charming affability, "I am obliged to you, Peak," dismissed him.

"It is a remarkable circumstance," he mused, dallying lazily with the tea-spoon, "that my friend the madman should have been within an ace of escaping on his trial; and it was a good



stroke of chance (or, as the world would say, a providential occurrence) that the brother of my Lord Mayor should have been in court, with other country justices, into whose very dense heads curiosity had penetrated. For though the brother of my Lord Mayor was decidedly wrong; and established his near relationship to that amusing person beyond all doubt, in stating that my friend was sane, and had, to his knowledge, wandered about the country with a vagabond parent, avowing revolutionary and rebellious sentiments; I am not the less obliged to him for volunteering that evidence. These insane creatures make such very odd and embarrassing remarks, that they really ought to be hanged for the comfort of society."

The country justice had indeed turned the wavering scale against poor Barnaby, and solved the doubt that trembled in his favour. Grip little thought how much he had to answer for.

"They will be a singular party," said Sir John, leaning his head upon his hand, and sipping his chocolate; "a very curious party. The hangman himself; the centaur; and the madman. The centaur would make a very handsome preparation in Surgeons' Hall, and would benefit science extremely. I hope they have taken care to bespeak him.—Peak, I am not at home, of course, to anybody but the hairdresser."

This reminder to his servant was called forth by a knock at the door, which the man hastened to open. After a prolonged murmur of question and answer, he returned; and, as he cautiously closed the room-door behind him, a man was heard to cough in the passage.

"Now, it is of no use, Peak," said Sir John, raising his hand in deprecation of his delivering any message; "I am not at home. I cannot possibly hear you. I told you I was not at home, and my word is sacred. Will you never do as you are desired?"

Having nothing to oppose to this reproof, the man was about to withdraw, when the visitor who had given occasion to it, probably rendered impatient by delay, knocked with his knuckles at the chamber door, and called out that he had urgent business with Sir John Chester, which admitted of no delay.

"Let him in," said Sir John. "My good fellow," he added, when the door was opened, "how come you to intrude yourself in this extraordinary manner upon the privacy of a gentleman? How can you be so wholly destitute of self-respect as to be guilty of such remarkable ill-breeding?"

"My business, Sir John, is not of a common

kind, I do assure you," returned the person he addressed. "If I have taken any uncommon course to get admission to you, I hope I shall be pardoned on that account."

"Well! we shall see; we shall see," returned Sir John, whose face cleared up when he saw who it was, and whose prepossessing smile was now restored. "I am sure we have met before," he added in his winning tone, "but really I forget your name."

"My name is Gabriel Varden, sir."

"Varden, of course, Varden," returned Sir John, tapping his forehead. "Dear me, how very defective my memory becomes! Varden to be sure—Mr. Varden the locksmith. You have a charming wife, Mr. Varden, and a most beautiful daughter. They are well?"

Gabriel thanked him, and said they were.

"I rejoice to hear it," said Sir John. "Commend me to them when you return, and say that I wished I were fortunate enough to convey myself the salute which I intrust you to deliver. And what," he asked very sweetly after a moment's pause, "can I do for you? You may command me freely."

"I thank you, Sir John," said Gabriel with some pride in his manner, "but I have come to ask no favour of you, though I come on business.—Private," he added, with a glance at the man, who stood looking on, "and very pressing business."

"I cannot say you are the more welcome for being independent, and having nothing to ask of me," returned Sir John graciously, "for I should have been happy to render you a service; still, you are welcome on any terms. Oblige me with some more chocolate, Peak, and don't wait."

The man retired, and left them alone.

"Sir John," said Gabriel, "I am a working-man, and have been so all my life. If I don't prepare you enough for what I have to tell; if I come to the point too abruptly; and give you a shock which a gentleman could have spared you, or at all events lessened very much; I hope you will give me credit for meaning well. I wish to be careful and considerate, and I trust that, in a straightforward person like me, you'll take the will for the deed."

"Mr. Varden," returned the other, perfectly composed under this exordium; "I beg you'll take a chair. Chocolate, perhaps, you don't relish? Well! it is an acquired taste, no doubt."

"Sir John," said Gabriel, who had acknowledged with a bow the invitation to be seated, but had not availed himself of it: "Sir John"—

he dropped his voice and drew nearer to the bed—"I am just now come from Newgate——"

"Good Gad!" cried Sir John, hastily sitting up in bed; "from Newgate, Mr. Varden! How could you be so very imprudent as to come from Newgate? Newgate, where there are gaol fevers, and ragged people, and barefooted men and women, and a thousand horrors! Peak, bring the camphor, quick! Heaven and earth, Mr. Varden, my dear, good soul, how *could* you come from Newgate?"

Gabriel returned no answer, but looked on in silence while Peak (who had entered opportunely with the hot chocolate) ran to a drawer, and returning with a bottle, sprinkled his master's dressing-gown, and the bedding; and, besides moistening the locksmith himself plentifully, described a circle round about him on the carpet. When he had done this, he again retired; and Sir John, reclining in an easy attitude upon his pillow, once more turned a smiling face towards his visitor.

"You will forgive me, Mr. Varden, I am sure, for being at first a little sensitive both on your account and my own. I confess I was startled, notwithstanding your delicate exordium. Might I ask you to do me the favour not to approach any nearer?—You have really come from Newgate?"

The locksmith inclined his head.

"In-deed! And now, Mr. Varden, all exaggeration and embellishment apart," said Sir John Chester confidentially, as he sipped his chocolate, "what kind of place *is* Newgate?"

"A strange place, Sir John," returned the locksmith, "of a sad and doleful kind. A strange place, where many strange things are heard and seen; but few more strange than that I come to tell you of. The case is urgent. I am sent here."

"Not—no, no—not from the gaol?"

"Yes, Sir John; from the gaol."

"And my good, credulous, open-hearted friend," said Sir John, setting down his cup, and laughing, "by whom?"

"By a man called Dennis—for many years the hangman, and to-morrow morning the hanged," returned the locksmith.

Sir John had expected—had been quite certain from the first—that he would say he had come from Hugh, and was prepared to meet him on that point. But this answer occasioned him a degree of astonishment which, for the moment, he could not, with all his command of feature, prevent his face from expressing. He quickly subdued it, however, and said in the same light tone:

"And what does the gentleman require of me? My memory may be at fault again, but I don't recollect that I ever had the pleasure of an introduction to him, or that I ever numbered him among my personal friends, I do assure you, Mr. Varden."

"Sir John," returned the locksmith gravely, "I will tell you, as nearly as I can, in the words he used to me, what he desires that you should know, and what you ought to know without a moment's loss of time."

Sir John Chester settled himself in a position of greater repose, and looked at his visitor with an expression of face which seemed to say, "This is an amusing fellow! I'll hear him out."

"You may have seen in the newspapers, sir," said Gabriel, pointing to the one which lay by his side, "that I was a witness against this man upon his trial some days since; and that it was not his fault I was alive, and able to speak to what I knew."

"*May* have seen!" cried Sir John. "My dear Mr. Varden, you are quite a public character, and live in all men's thoughts most deservedly. Nothing can exceed the interest with which I read your testimony, and remembered that I had the pleasure of a slight acquaintance with you.—I hope we shall have your portrait published?"

"This morning, sir," said the locksmith, taking no notice of these compliments. "early this morning, a message was brought to me from Newgate, at this man's request, desiring that I would go and see him, for he had something particular to communicate. I needn't tell you that he is no friend of mine, and that I had never seen him until the rioters beset my house."

Sir John fanned himself gently with the newspaper, and nodded.

"I knew, however, from the general report," resumed Gabriel, "that the order for his execution to-morrow went down to the prison last night; and, looking upon him as a dying man, I complied with his request."

"You are quite a Christian, Mr. Varden," said Sir John; "and in that amiable capacity, you increase my desire that you should take a chair."

"He said," continued Gabriel, looking steadily at the knight, "that he had sent to me because he had no friend or companion in the whole world (being the common hangman), and because he believed, from the way in which I had given my evidence, that I was an honest man, and would act truly by him. He said that, being shunned by every one who knew his calling, even by people of the lowest and most



wretched grade, and finding, when he joined the rioters, that the men he acted with had no suspicion of it (which I believe is true enough, for a poor fool of an old 'prentice of mine was one of them), he had kept his own counsel up to the time of his being taken and put in gaol."

"Very discreet of Mr. Dennis," observed Sir John with a slight yawn, though still with the utmost affability, "but—except for your admirable and lucid manner of telling it, which is perfect—not very interesting to me."

"When," pursued the locksmith, quite unabashed and wholly regardless of these interruptions, "when he was taken to the gaol, he found that his fellow-prisoner, in the same room, was a young man, Hugh by name, a leader in the riots, who had been betrayed and given up by himself. From something which fell from this unhappy creature in the course of the angry words they had at meeting, he discovered that his mother had suffered the death to which they both are now condemned.—The time is very short, Sir John."

The knight laid down his paper fan, replaced his cup upon the table at his side, and, saving for the smile that lurked about his mouth, looked at the locksmith with as much steadiness as the locksmith looked at him.

"They had been in prison now a month. One conversation led to many more; and the hangman soon found, from a comparison of time, and place, and dates, that he had executed the sentence of the law upon this woman himself. She had been tempted by want—as so many people are—into the easy crime of passing forged notes. She was young and handsome; and the traders who employ men, women, and children in the traffic, looked upon her as one who was well adapted for their business, and who would probably go on without suspicion for a long time. But they were mistaken; for she was stopped in the commission of her very first offence, and died for it. She was of gipsy blood, Sir John——"

It might have been the effect of a passing cloud which obscured the sun, and cast a shadow on his face; but the knight turned deadly pale. Still he met the locksmith's eye as before.

"—She was of gipsy blood, Sir John," repeated Gabriel, "and had a high, free spirit. This, and her good looks, and her lofty manner, interested some gentlemen who were easily moved by dark eyes; and efforts were made to save her. They might have been successful, if she would have given them any clue to her history. But she never would, or did. There was reason to suspect that she would make an

attempt upon her life. A watch was set upon her night and day; and from that time she never spoke again——"

Sir John stretched out his hand towards his cup. The locksmith going on, arrested it half-way.

"—Until she had but a minute to live. Then she broke silence, and said, in a low firm voice which no one heard but this executioner, for all other living creatures had retired and left her to her fate, 'If I had a dagger within these fingers, and he was within my reach, I would strike him dead before me, even now!' The man asked 'Who?' She said, 'The father of her boy.'"

Sir John drew back his outstretched hand, and seeing that the locksmith paused, signed to him with easy politeness, and without any new appearance of emotion, to proceed.

"It was the first word she had ever spoken, from which it could be understood that she had any relative on earth. 'Was the child alive?' he asked. 'Yes.' He asked her where it was, its name, and whether she had any wish respecting it. She had but one, she said. It was that the boy might live and grow in utter ignorance of his father, so that no arts might teach him to be gentle and forgiving. When he became a man, she trusted to the God of their tribe to bring the father and the son together, and revenge her through her child. He asked her other questions, but she spoke no more. Indeed, he says she scarcely said this much to him, but stood with her face turned upwards to the sky, and never looked towards him once."

Sir John took a pinch of snuff; glanced approvingly at an elegant little sketch, entitled "Nature," on the wall; and raising his eyes to the locksmith's face again, said, with an air of courtesy and patronage, "You were observing, Mr. Varden——"

"That she never," returned the locksmith, who was not to be diverted by any artifice from his firm manner and his steady gaze, "that she never looked towards him once, Sir John; and so she died, and he forgot her. But, some years afterwards, a man was sentenced to die the same death, who was a gipsy too; a sunburnt, swarthy fellow, almost a wild man; and while he lay in prison, under sentence, he, who had seen the hangman more than once while he was free, cut an image of him on his stick, by way of braving death, and showing those who attended on him how little he cared or thought about it. He gave this stick into his hands at Tyburn, and told him then that the woman I have spoken of had left her own people to join a fine gentle-

man, and that, being deserted by him, and cast off by her old friends, she had sworn within her own proud breast, that whatever her misery might be, she would ask no help of any human being. He told him that she had kept her word to the last; and that, meeting even him in the streets—he had been fond of her once, it seems—she had slipped from him by a trick, and he never saw her again until, being in one of the frequent crowds at Tyburn, with some of his rough companions, he had been driven almost mad by seeing, in the criminal under another name, whose death he had come to witness, herself. Standing in the same place in which she had stood, he told the hangman this, and told him, too, her real name, which only her own people, and the gentleman for whose sake she had left them, knew.—That name he will tell again, Sir John, to none but you.”

“To none but me!” exclaimed the knight, pausing in the act of raising his cup to his lips with a perfectly steady hand, and curling up his little finger for the better display of a brilliant ring with which it was ornamented: “but me!—My dear Mr. Varden, how very preposterous to select me for his confidence! With you at his elbow, too, who are so perfectly trustworthy!”

“Sir John, Sir John,” returned the locksmith, “at twelve to-morrow these men die. Hear the few words I have to add, and do not hope to deceive me; for though I am a plain man of humble station, and you are a gentleman of rank and learning, the truth raises me to your level, and I know that you anticipate the disclosure with which I am about to end, and that you believe this doomed man, Hugh, to be your son.”

“Nay,” said Sir John, bantering him with a gay air; “the wild gentleman, who died so suddenly, scarcely went as far as that, I think?”

“He did not,” returned the locksmith, “for she had bound him by some pledge, known only to these people, and which the worst among them respect, not to tell your name: but, in a fantastic pattern on the stick, he had carved some letters, and when the hangman asked it, he bade him, especially if he should ever meet with her son in after life, remember that place well.”

“What place?”

“Chester.”

The knight finished his cup of chocolate with an appearance of infinite relish, and carefully wiped his lips upon his handkerchief.

“Sir John,” said the locksmith, “this is all that has been told to me; but, since these two men have been left for death, they have conferred together closely. See them, and hear

what they can add. See this Dennis, and learn from him what he has not trusted to me. If you, who hold the clue to all, want corroboration (which you do not), the means are easy.”

“And to what,” said Sir John Chester, rising on his elbow, after smoothing the pillow for its reception; “my dear, good-natured, estimable Mr. Varden—with whom I cannot be angry if I would—to what does all this tend?”

“I take you for a man, Sir John, and I suppose it tends to some pleading of natural affection in your breast,” returned the locksmith. “I suppose to the straining of every nerve and the exertion of all the influence you have, or can make, in behalf of your miserable son, and the man who has disclosed his existence to you. At the worst, I suppose to your seeing your son, and awakening him to a sense of his crime and danger. He has no such sense now. Think what his life must have been, when he said in my hearing, that if I moved you to anything, it would be to hastening his death, and insuring his silence, if you had it in your power!”

“And have you, my good Mr. Varden,” said Sir John in a tone of mild reproof, “have you really lived to your present age, and remained so very simple and credulous as to approach a gentleman of established character with such credentials as these, from desperate men in their last extremity, catching at any straw? Oh dear! Oh, fie, fie!”

The locksmith was going to interpose, but he stopped him:

“On any other subject, Mr. Varden, I shall be delighted—I shall be charmed—to converse with you, but I owe it to my own character not to pursue this topic for another moment.”

“Think better of it, sir, when I am gone,” returned the locksmith; “think better of it, sir, Although you have, thrice within as many weeks, turned your lawful son, Mr. Edward, from your door, you may have time, you may have years, to make your peace with *him*, Sir John: but that twelve o’clock will soon be here, and soon be past for ever.”

“I thank you very much,” returned the knight, kissing his delicate hand to the locksmith, “for your guileless advice; and I only wish, my good soul, although your simplicity is quite captivating, that you had a little more worldly wisdom. I never so much regretted the arrival of my hairdresser as I do at this moment. God bless you! Good morning! You’ll not forget my message to the ladies, Mr. Varden? Peak, show Mr. Varden to the door.”

Gabriel said no more, but gave the knight a parting look, and left him. As he quitted the



room, Sir John's face changed; and the smile gave place to a haggard and anxious expression, like that of a weary actor jaded by the performance of a difficult part. He rose from his bed with a heavy sigh, and wrapped himself in his morning gown.

"So she kept her word," he said, "and was constant to her threat! I would I had never seen that dark face of hers,—I might have read these consequences in it from the first. This affair would make a noise abroad if it rested on better evidence; but, as it is, and by not joining the scattered links of the chain, I can afford to slight it.—Extremely distressing to be the parent of such an uncouth creature! Still, I gave him very good advice. I told him he would certainly be hanged. I could have done no more if I had known of our relationship; and there are a great many fathers who have never done as much for *their* natural children.—The hairdresser may come in, Peak!"

The hairdresser came in; and saw in Sir John Chester (whose accommodating conscience was soon quieted by the numerous precedents that occurred to him in support of his last observation) the same imperturbable, fascinating, elegant gentleman he had seen yesterday, and many yesterdays before.

#### CHAPTER LXXVI.

**A**S the locksmith walked slowly away from Sir John Chester's chambers, he lingered under the trees which shaded the path, almost hoping that he might be summoned to return. He had turned back thrice, and still loitered at the corner, when the clock struck twelve.

It was a solemn sound, and not merely for its reference to to-morrow; for he knew that in that chime the murderer's knell was rung. He had seen him pass along the crowded street, amidst the execrations of the throng; had marked his quivering lip and trembling limbs; the ashy hue upon his face, his clammy brow, the wild distraction of his eye,—the fear of death that swallowed up all other thoughts, and gnawed without cessation at his heart and brain. He had marked the wandering look, seeking for hope, and finding, turn where it would, despair. He had seen the remorseful, pitiful, desolate creature riding, with his coffin by his side, to the gibbet. He knew that, to the last, he had,

been an unyielding, obdurate man; that in the savage terror of his condition, he had hardened, rather than relented, to his wife and child; and that the last words which had passed his white lips were curses on them as his enemies.

Mr. Haredale had determined to be there and see it done. Nothing but the evidence of his own senses could satisfy that gloomy thirst for retribution which had been gathering upon him for so many years. The locksmith knew this, and, when the chimes had ceased to vibrate, hurried away to meet him.

"For these two men," he said as he went, "I can do no more. Heaven have mercy on them!—Alas! I say I can do no more for them, but whom *can* I help? Mary Rudge will have a home, and a firm friend when she most wants one; but Barnaby—poor Barnaby—willing Barnaby—what aid can I render him? There are many, many men of sense, God forgive me," cried the honest locksmith, stopping in a narrow court to pass his hand across his eyes, "I could better afford to lose than Barnaby. We have always been good friends, but I never knew, till now, how much I loved the lad."

There were not many in the great city who thought of Barnaby that day, otherwise than as an actor in a show which was to take place to-morrow. But, if the whole population had had him in their minds, and had wished his life to be spared, not one among them could have done so with a purer zeal or greater singleness of heart than the good locksmith.

Barnaby was to die. There was no hope. It is not the least evil attendant upon the frequent exhibition of this last dread punishment of Death, that it hardens the minds of those who deal it out, and makes them, though they be amiable men in other respects, indifferent to, or unconscious of, their great responsibility. The word had gone forth that Barnaby was to die. It went forth, every month, for lighter crimes. It was a thing so common that very few were startled by the awful sentence, or cared to question its propriety. Just then, too, when the law had been so flagrantly outraged, its dignity must be asserted. The symbol of its dignity—stamped upon every page of the criminal statute-book—was the gallows; and Barnaby was to die.

They had tried to save him. The locksmith had carried petitions and memorials to the fountain-head with his own hands. But the well was not one of mercy, and Barnaby was to die.

From the first, his mother had never left him, save at night; and, with her beside him, he was,

as usual, contented. On this last day he was more elated and more proud than he had been yet; and when she dropped the book she had been reading to him aloud, and fell upon his neck, he stopped in his busy task of folding a

piece of crape about his hat, and wondered at her anguish. Grip uttered a feeble croak, half in encouragement, it seemed, and half in remonstrance, but he wanted heart to sustain it, and lapsed abruptly into silence.



HE ROSE FROM HIS BED WITH A HEAVY SIGH, AND WRAPPED HIMSELF IN HIS MORNING GOWN.  
 "SO SHE KEPT HER WORD," HE SAID, "AND WAS CONSTANT TO HER THREAT!"

With them, who stood upon the brink of the great gulf which none can see beyond, Time, so soon to lose itself in vast Eternity, rolled on like a mighty river, swollen and rapid as it nears the sea. It was morning but now; they had sat and talked together in a dream; and here

was evening. The dreadful hour of separation, which even yesterday had seemed so distant, was at hand.

They walked out into the courtyard, clinging to each other, but not speaking. Barnaby knew that the gaol was a dull, sad, miserable place,



and looked forward to to-morrow as to a passage from it to something bright and beautiful. He had a vague impression, too, that he was expected to be brave—that he was a man of great consequence, and that the prison people would be glad to make him weep. He trod the ground more firmly as he thought of this, and bade her take heart and cry no more, and feel how steady his hand was. "They call me silly, mother. They shall see—to-morrow!"

Dennis and Hugh were in the courtyard. Hugh came forth from his cell as they did, stretching himself as though he had been sleeping. Dennis sat upon a bench in a corner, with his knees and chin huddled together, and rocked himself to and fro like a person in severe pain.

The mother and son remained on one side of the court, and these two men upon the other. Hugh strode up and down, glancing fiercely every now and then at the bright summer sky, and looking round, when he had done so, at the walls.

"No reprieve, no reprieve! Nobody comes near us. There's only the night left now!" moaned Dennis faintly as he wrung his hands. "Do you think they'll reprieve me in the night, brother? I've known reprieves come in the night, afore now. I've known 'em come as late as five, six, and seven o'clock in the morning. Don't you think there's a good chance yet,—don't you? Say you do. Say *you* do, young man," whined the miserable creature, with an imploring gesture towards Barnaby, "or I shall go mad!"

"Better be mad than sane here," said Hugh. "Go mad."

"But tell me what you think. Somebody tell me what he thinks!" cried the wretched object,—so mean, and wretched, and despicable, that even Pity's self might have turned away at sight of such a being in the likeness of a man. "Isn't there a chance for me,—isn't there a good chance for me? Isn't it likely they may be doing this to frighten me? Don't you think it is? Oh!" he almost shrieked as he wrung his hands, "won't anybody give me comfort?"

"You ought to be the best instead of the worst," said Hugh, stopping before him. "Ha, ha, ha! See the hangman when it comes home to him!"

"You don't know what it is," cried Dennis, actually writhing as he spoke: "I do. That I should come to be worked off! I! I! That I should come!"

"And why not?" said Hugh as he thrust back his matted hair to get a better view of his

late associate. "How often, before I knew your trade, did I hear you talking of this as if it was a treat!"

"I an't inconsistent," screamed the miserable creature; "I'd talk so again if I was hangman. Some other man has got my old opinions at this minute. That makes it worse. Somebody's longing to work me off. I know by myself that somebody must be!"

"He'll soon have his longing," said Hugh, resuming his walk. "Think of that, and be quiet."

Although one of these men displayed, in his speech and bearing, the most reckless hardihood; and the other, in his every word and action, testified such an extreme of abject cowardice that it was humiliating to see him; it would be difficult to say which of them would most have repelled and shocked an observer. Hugh's was the dogged desperation of a savage at the stake; the hangman was reduced to a condition little better, if any, than that of a hound with the halter round his neck. Yet, as Mr. Dennis knew and could have told them, these were the two commonest states of mind in persons brought to their pass. Such was the wholesale growth of the seed sown by the law, that this kind of harvest was usually looked for as a matter of course.

In one respect they all agreed. The wandering and uncontrollable train of thought, suggesting sudden recollections of things distant and long forgotten, and remote from each other—the vague restless craving for something undefined, which nothing could satisfy—the swift flight of the minutes, fusing themselves into hours, as if by enchantment—the rapid coming of the solemn night—the shadow of death always upon them, and yet so dim and faint, that objects the meanest and most trivial started from the gloom beyond, and forced themselves upon the view—the impossibility of holding the mind, even if they had been so disposed, to penitence and preparation, or of keeping it to any point while one hideous fascination tempted it away—these things were common to them all, and varied only in their outward tokens.

"Fetch me the book I left within—upon your bed," she said to Barnaby as the clock struck. "Kiss me first!"

He looked in her face, and saw there that the time was come. After a long embrace, he tore himself away, and ran to bring it to her; bidding her not stir till he came back. He soon returned, for a shriek recalled him,—but she was gone.

He ran to the yard-gate, and looked through.

They were carrying her away. She had said her heart would break. It was better so.

"Don't you think," whimpered Dennis, creeping up to him as he stood with his feet rooted to the ground, gazing at the blank walls—"don't you think there's still a chance? It's a dreadful end: it's a terrible end for a man like me. Don't you think there's a chance? I don't mean for you, I mean for me. Don't let *him* hear us" (meaning Hugh); "he's so desperate."

"Now then," said the officer, who had been lounging in and out with his hands in his pockets, and yawning as if he were in the last extremity for some subject of interest: "it's time to turn in, boys."

"Not yet," cried Dennis, "not yet. Not for an hour yet."

"I say,—your watch goes different from what it used to," returned the man. "Once upon a time it was always too fast. It's got the other fault now."

"My friend," cried the wretched creature, falling on his knees, "my dear friend—you always were my dear friend—there's some mistake. Some letter has been mislaid, or some messenger has been stopped upon the way. He may have fallen dead. I saw a man once fall down dead in the street myself, and he had papers in his pocket. Send to inquire. Let somebody go to inquire. They never will hang me. They never can.—Yes, they will," he cried, starting to his feet with a terrible scream. "They'll hang me by a trick, and keep the pardon back. It's a plot against me. I shall lose my life!" And uttering another yell, he fell in a fit upon the ground.

"See the hangman when it comes home to him!" cried Hugh again as they bore him away. "Ha, ha, ha! Courage, bold Barnaby: what care we? Your hand! They do well to put us out of the world, for if we got loose a second time, we wouldn't let them off so easy, eh? Another shake! A man can die but once. If you wake in the night, sing that out lustily, and fall asleep again. Ha, ha, ha!"

Barnaby glanced once more through the grate into the empty yard; and then watched Hugh as he strode to the steps leading to his sleeping cell. He heard him shout and burst into a roar of laughter, and saw him flourish his hat. Then he turned away himself, like one who walked in his sleep; and, without any sense of fear or sorrow, lay down on his pallet, listening for the clock to strike again.

## CHAPTER LXXVII.

**T**HE time wore on. The noises in the streets became less frequent by degrees, until silence was scarcely broken save by the bells in church towers, marking the progress—softer and more stealthy while the city slumbered—of that Great Watcher with the hoary head, who never sleeps or rests. In the brief interval of darkness and repose which feverish towns enjoy, all busy sounds were hushed; and those who awoke from dreams lay listening in their beds, and longed for dawn, and wished the dead of the night were past.

Into the street outside the gaol's main wall, workmen came straggling at this solemn hour, in groups of two or three, and meeting in the centre, cast their tools upon the ground and spoke in whispers. Others soon issued from the gaol itself, bearing on their shoulders planks and beams: these materials being all brought forth, the rest bestirred themselves, and the dull sound of hammers began to echo through the stillness.

Here and there among this knot of labourers, one, with a lantern or a smoky link, stood by to light his fellows at their work; and by its doubtful aid some might be dimly seen taking up the pavement of the road, while others held great upright posts, or fixed them in the holes thus made for their reception. Some dragged slowly on towards the rest an empty cart, which they brought rumbling from the prison yard; while others erected strong barriers across the street. All were busily engaged. Their dusky figures moving to and fro at that unusual hour, so active and so silent, might have been taken for those of shadowy creatures toiling at midnight on some ghostly unsubstantial work, which, like themselves, would vanish with the first gleam of day, and leave but morning mist and vapour.

While it was yet dark a few lookers-on collected, who had plainly come there for the purpose, and intended to remain: even those who had to pass the spot on their way to some other place, lingered, and lingered yet, as though the attraction of that were irresistible. Meanwhile, the noise of saw and mallet went on briskly, mingled with the clattering of boards on the stone pavement of the road, and sometimes with the workmen's voices as they called to one another. Whenever the chimes of the neighbouring church were heard—and that was every quarter of an hour—a strange sensation, instant-



neous and indescribable, but perfectly obvious, seemed to pervade them all.

Gradually a faint brightness appeared in the east, and the air, which had been very warm all through the night, felt cool and chilly. Though there was no daylight yet, the darkness was diminished and the stars looked pale. The prison, which had been a mere black mass with little shape or form, put on its usual aspect; and ever and anon a solitary watchman could be seen upon its roof, stopping to look down upon the preparations in the street. This man, from forming, as it were, a part of the gaol, and knowing, or being supposed to know, all that was passing within, became an object of as much interest, and was as eagerly looked for, and as awfully pointed out, as if he had been a spirit.

By-and-by the feeble light grew stronger, and the houses, with their sign-boards and inscriptions, stood plainly out in the dull grey morning. Heavy stage-waggons crawled from the inn yard opposite, and travellers peeped out; and, as they rolled sluggishly away, cast many a backward look towards the gaol. And now the sun's first beams came glancing into the street; and the night's work, which, in its various stages and in the varied fancies of the lookers-on, had taken a hundred shapes, wore its own proper form—a scaffold, and a gibbet.

As the warmth of cheerful day began to shed itself upon the scanty crowd, the murmur of tongues was heard, shutters were thrown open, and blinds drawn up, and those who had slept in rooms over against the prison, where places to see the execution were let at high prices, rose hastily from their beds. In some of the houses people were busy taking out the window-sashes for the better accommodation of spectators; in others, the spectators were already seated, and beguiling the time with cards, or drink, or jokes among themselves. Some had purchased seats upon the housetops, and were already crawling to their stations from parapet and garret window. Some were yet bargaining for good places, and stood in them in a state of indecision: gazing at the slowly-swelling crowd, and at the workmen as they rested listlessly against the scaffold—affecting to listen with indifference to the proprietor's eulogy of the commanding view his house afforded, and the surpassing cheapness of his terms.

A fairer morning never shone. From the roofs and upper stories of these buildings the spires of City churches and the great cathedral dome were visible, rising up beyond the prison into the blue sky, and clad in the colour of light summer clouds, and showing in the clear

atmosphere their every scrap of tracery and fret-work, and every niche and loophole. All was brightness and promise, excepting in the street below, into which (for it yet lay in shadow) the eye looked down as into a dark trench, where, in the midst of so much life, and hope, and renewal of existence, stood the terrible instrument of death. It seemed as if the very sun forbore to look upon it.

But it was better, grim and sombre in the shade, than when, the day being more advanced, it stood confessed in the full glare and glory of the sun, with its black paint blistering, and its nooses dangling in the light like loathsome garlands. It was better in the solitude and gloom of midnight, with a few ferns clustering about it, than in the freshness and the stir of morning: the centre of an eager crowd. It was better haunting the street like a spectre, when men were in their beds, and influencing perchance the city's dreams, than braving the broad day, and thrusting its obscene presence upon their waking senses.

Five o'clock had struck—six—seven—and eight. Along the two main streets at either end of the crossway, a living stream had now set in, rolling towards the marts of gain and business. Carts, coaches, waggons, trucks, and barrows forced a passage through the outskirts of the throng, and clattered onward in the same direction. Some of these which were public conveyances, and had come from a short distance in the country, stopped; and the driver pointed to the gibbet with his whip, though he might have spared himself the pains, for the heads of all the passengers were turned that way without his help, and the coach windows were stuck full of staring eyes. In some of the carts and waggons women might be seen, glancing fearfully at the same unsightly thing; and even little children were held up above the people's heads to see what kind of toy a gallows was, and learn how men were hanged.

Two rioters were to die before the prison, who had been concerned in the attack upon it; and one directly afterwards in Bloomsbury Square. At nine o'clock a strong body of military marched into the street, and formed and lined a narrow passage into Holborn, which had been indifferently kept all night by constables. Through this another cart was brought (the one already mentioned had been employed in the construction of the scaffold), and wheeled up to the prison gate. These preparations made, the soldiers stood at ease; the officers lounged to and fro in the alley they had made, or talked together at the scaffold's foot; and the con-

course, which had been rapidly augmenting for some hours, and still received additions every minute, waited with an impatience which increased with every chime of St. Sepulchre's clock, for twelve at noon.

Up to this time they had been very quiet, comparatively silent, save when the arrival of some new party at a window, hitherto unoccupied, gave them something new to look at or to talk of. But, as the hour approached, a buzz

and hum arose, which, deepening every moment, soon swelled into a roar, and seemed to fill the air. No words, or even voices, could be distinguished in this clamour, nor did they speak much to each other; though such as were better informed upon the rest than the rest would tell their neighbours, perhaps, that they might know the hangman when he came out, by his being the shorter one: and that the man who was to suffer with him was named Hugh: and that it



"YOU OUGHT TO BE THE BEST INSTEAD OF THE WORST," SAID HUGH, STOPPING BEFORE HIM.  
 "HA, HA, HA! SEE THE HANGMAN WHEN IT COMES HOME TO HIM!"

was Barnaby Rudge who would be hanged in Bloomsbury Square.

The hum grew, as the time drew near, so loud, that those who were at the windows could not hear the church clock strike, though it was close at hand. Nor had they any need to hear it either, for they could see it in the people's faces. So surely as another quarter chimed, there was a movement in the crowd—as if something had passed over it—as if the light upon them had

been changed—in which the fact was readable as on a brazen dial, figured by a giant's hand.

Three-quarters past eleven! The murmur now was deafening, yet every man seemed mute. Look where you would among the crowd, you saw strained eyes and lips compressed; it would have been difficult for the most vigilant observer to point this way or that, and say that yonder man had cried out. It were as easy to detect the motion of lips in a sea-shell.



Three-quarters past eleven! Many spectators who had retired from the windows came back refreshed, as though their watch had just begun. Those who had fallen asleep roused themselves; and every person in the crowd made one last effort to better his position—which caused a press against the sturdy barriers that made them bend and yield like twigs. The officers, who until now had kept together, fell into their several positions, and gave the words of command. Swords were drawn, muskets shouldered, and the bright steel, winding its way among the crowd, gleamed and glittered in the sun like a river. Along this shining path two men came hurrying on, leading a horse, which was speedily harnessed to the cart at the prison door. Then a profound silence replaced the tumult that had so long been gathering, and a breathless pause ensued. Every window was now choked up with heads; the housetops teemed with people—clinging to chimneys, peering over gable-ends, and holding on where the sudden loosening of any brick or stone would dash them down into the street. The church tower, the church roof, the churchyard, the prison leads, the very waterspouts and lamp-posts—every inch of room—swarmed with human life.

At the first stroke of twelve the prison bell began to toll. Then the roar—mingled now with cries of "Hats off!" and "Poor fellows!" and, from some specks in the great concourse, with a shriek or groan—burst forth again. It was terrible to see—if any one in that distraction of excitement could have seen—the world of eager eyes, all strained upon the scaffold and the beam.

The hollow murmuring was heard within the gaol as plainly as without. The three were brought forth into the yard together as it resounded through the air. They knew its import well.

"D'ye hear?" cried Hugh, undaunted by the sound. "They expect us! I heard them gathering when I woke in the night, and turned over on t'other side and fell asleep again. We shall see how they welcome the hangman, now that it comes home to him. Ha, ha, ha!"

The Ordinary, coming up at this moment, reproved him for his indecent mirth, and advised him to alter his demeanour.

"And why, master?" said Hugh. "Can I do better than bear it easily? *You* bear it easily enough. Oh! never tell me," he cried, as the other would have spoken, "for all your sad look and your solemn air, you think little enough of it! They say you're the best maker of lobster salads in London. Ha, ha! I've

heard that, you see, before now. Is it a good one this morning—is your hand in? How does the breakfast look? I hope there's enough, and to spare, for all this hungry company that'll sit down to it when the sight's over."

"I fear," observed the clergyman, shaking his head, "that you are incorrigible."

"You're right. I am," rejoined Hugh sternly. "Be no hypocrite, master! You make a merry-making of this every month; let me be merry too. If you want a frightened fellow, there's one that'll suit you. Try your hand upon him."

He pointed, as he spoke, to Dennis, who, with his legs trailing on the ground, was held between two men; and who trembled so, that all his joints and limbs seemed racked by spasms. Turning from this wretched spectacle, he called to Barnaby, who stood apart.

"What cheer, Barnaby? Don't be downcast, lad. Leave that to *him*."

"Bless you," cried Barnaby, stepping lightly towards him, "I'm not frightened, Hugh. I'm quite happy. I wouldn't desire to live now, if they'd let me. Look at me! Am I afraid to die? Will they see *me* tremble?"

Hugh gazed for a moment at his face, on which there was a strange, unearthly smile; and at his eye, which sparkled brightly; and interposing between him and the Ordinary, gruffly whispered to the latter:

"I wouldn't say much to him, master, if I was you. He may spoil your appetite for breakfast, though you *are* used to it."

He was the only one of the three who had washed or trimmed himself that morning. Neither of the others had done so since their doom was pronounced. He still wore the broken peacock's feathers in his hat; and all his usual scraps of finery were carefully disposed about his person. His kindling eye, his firm step, his proud and resolute bearing, might have graced some lofty act of heroism; some voluntary sacrifice, born of a noble cause and pure enthusiasm; rather than that felon's death.

But all these things increased his guilt. They were mere assumptions. The law had declared it so, and so it must be. The good minister had been greatly shocked, not a quarter of an hour before, at his parting with Grip. For one in his condition, to fondle a bird!—

The yard was filled with people; bluff civic functionaries, officers of justice, soldiers, the curious in such matters, and guests who had been bidden as to a wedding. Hugh looked about him, nodded gloomily to some person in authority, who indicated with his hand in what

direction he was to proceed; and, clapping Barnaby on the shoulder, passed out with the gait of a lion.

They entered a large room, so near to the scaffold that the voices of those who stood about it could be plainly heard: some beseeching the javelin-men to take them out of the crowd: others crying to those behind to stand back, for they were pressed to death, and suffocating for want of air.

In the middle of this chamber, two smiths, with hammers, stood beside an anvil. Hugh walked straight up to them, and set his foot upon it with a sound as though it had been struck by a heavy weapon. Then, with folded arms, he stood to have his irons knocked off: scowling haughtily round, as those who were present eyed him narrowly and whispered to each other.

It took so much time to drag Dennis in, that this ceremony was over with Hugh, and nearly over with Barnaby, before he appeared. He no sooner came into the place he knew so well, however, and among faces with which he was so familiar, than he recovered strength and sense enough to clasp his hands and make a last appeal.

"Gentlemen, good gentlemen," cried the abject creature, grovelling down upon his knees, and actually prostrating himself upon the stone floor: "governor, dear governor—honourable sheriffs—worthy gentlemen—have mercy upon a wretched man that has served his Majesty, and the Law, and Parliament for so many years, and don't—don't let me die—because of a mistake."

"Dennis," said the governor of the gaol, "you know what the course is, and that the order came with the rest. You know that we could do nothing, even if we would."

"All I ask, sir,—all I want and beg, is time to make it sure," cried the trembling wretch, looking wildly round for sympathy. "The King and Government can't know it's me; I'm sure they can't know it's me; or they never would bring me to this dreadful slaughter-house. They know my name, but they don't know it's the same man. Stop my execution—for charity's sake, stop my execution, gentlemen—till they can be told that I've been hangman here nigh thirty year. Will no one go and tell them?" he implored, clenching his hands, and glaring round, and round, and round again. "Will no charitable person go and tell them?"

"Mr. Akerman," said a gentleman who stood by, after a moment's pause, "since it may possibly produce in this unhappy man a better frame of mind, even at this last minute, let me

assure him that he was well known to have been the hangman when his sentence was considered."

"—But perhaps they think, on that account, that the punishment's not so great," cried the criminal, shuffling towards this speaker on his knees, and holding up his folded hands; "whereas it's worse, it's worse a hundred times, to me than any man. Let them know that, sir. Let them know that. They've made it worse to me by giving me so much to do. Stop my execution till they know that."

The governor beckoned with his hand, and the two men, who had supported him before, approached. He uttered a piercing cry:

"Wait! Wait! Only a moment—only one moment more! Give me a last chance of reprieve. One of us three is to go to Bloomsbury Square. Let me be the one. It may come in that time; it's sure to come. In the Lord's name let me be sent to Bloomsbury Square! Don't hang me here. It's murder!"

They took him to the anvil: but even then he could be heard above the clinking of the smiths' hammers, and the hoarse raging of the crowd, crying that he knew of Hugh's birth—that his father was living, and was a gentleman of influence and rank—that he had family secrets in his possession—that he could tell nothing unless they gave him time, but must die with them on his mind; and he continued to rave in this sort until his voice failed him, and he sank down a mere heap of clothes between the two attendants.

It was at this moment that the clock struck the first stroke of twelve, and the bell began to toll. The various officers, with the two sheriffs at their head, moved towards the door. All was ready when the last chime came upon the ear.

They told Hugh this, and asked if he had anything to say.

"To say!" he cried. "Not I! I'm ready.—Yes," he added as his eye fell upon Barnaby, "I have a word to say, too. Come hither, lad."

There was, for the moment, something kind, and even tender, struggling in his fierce aspect, as he wrung his poor companion by the hand. "I'll say this," he cried, looking firmly round, "that if I had ten lives to lose, and the loss of each would give me ten times the agony of the hardest death, I'd lay them all down—ay, I would, though you gentlemen may not believe it—to save this one. This one," he added, wringing his hand again, "that will be lost through me."



"Not through you," said the idiot mildly. "Don't say that. You were not to blame. You have been always very good to me.—Hugh, we shall know what makes the stars shine now!"

"I took him from her in a reckless mood, and didn't think what harm would come of it," said Hugh, laying his hand upon his head, and speaking in a lower voice. "I ask her pardon, and his.—Look here," he added roughly, in his former tone. "You see this lad?"

They murmured "Yes," and seemed to wonder why he asked.

"That gentleman yonder"—pointing to the clergyman—"has often, in the last few days, spoken to me of faith and strong belief. You see what I am—more brute than man, as I have been often told—but I had faith enough to believe, and did believe as strongly as any of you gentlemen can believe anything, that this one life would be spared. See what he is!—Look at him!"

Barnaby had moved towards the door, and stood beckoning him to follow.

"If this was not faith and strong belief!" cried Hugh, raising his right arm aloft, and looking upward like a savage prophet whom the near approach of Death had filled with inspiration, "where are they? What else should teach me—me, born as I was born, and reared as I have been reared—to hope for any mercy in this hardened, cruel, unrelenting place? Upon these human shambles, I, who never raised his hand in prayer till now, call down the wrath of God! On that black tree, of which I am the ripened fruit, I do invoke the curse of all its victims, past, and present, and to come. On the head of that man, who in his conscience owns me for his son, I leave the wish that he may never sicken on his bed of down, but die a violent death as I do now, and have the night wind for his only mourner. To this I say, Amen, amen!"

His arm fell downward by his side; he turned; and moved towards them with a steady step, the man he had been before.

"There is nothing more?" said the governor.

Hugh motioned Barnaby not to come near him (though without looking in the direction where he stood), and answered, "There is nothing more."

"Move forward!"

"—Unless," said Hugh, glancing hurriedly back, "unless any person here has a fancy for a dog; and not then, unless he means to use him well. There's one, belongs to me, at the house I came from, and it wouldn't be easy to

find a better. He'll whine at first, but he'll soon get over that.—You wonder that I think about a dog just now," he added with a kind of laugh. "If any man deserved it of me half as well, I'd think of *him*."

He spoke no more, but moved onward in his place with a careless air, though listening at the same time to the Service for the Dead, with something between sullen attention and quickened curiosity. As soon as he had passed the door, his miserable associate was carried out; and the crowd beheld the rest.

Barnaby would have mounted the steps at the same time—indeed, he would have gone before them, but in both attempts he was restrained, as he was to undergo the sentence elsewhere. In a few minutes the sheriffs reappeared, the same procession was again formed, and they passed through various rooms and passages to another door—that at which the cart was waiting. He held down his head to avoid seeing what he knew his eyes must otherwise encounter, and took his seat sorrowfully, and yet with something of a childish pride and pleasure, in the vehicle. The officers fell into their places at the sides, in front, and in the rear; the sheriffs' carriages rolled on; and a guard of soldiers surrounded the whole; and they moved slowly forward through the throng and pressure towards Lord Mansfield's ruined house.

It was a sad sight—all the show, and strength, and glitter, assembled round one helpless creature—and sadder yet to note, as he rode along, how his wandering thoughts found strange encouragement in the crowded windows and the concourse in the streets; and how, even then, he felt the influence of the bright sky, and looked up, smiling, into its deep unfathomable blue. But there had been many such sights since the riots were over—some so moving in their nature, and so repulsive too, that they were far more calculated to awaken pity for the sufferers than respect for that law whose strong arm seemed, in more than one case, to be as wantonly stretched forth, now that all was safe, as it had been basely paralysed in time of danger.

Two cripples—both mere boys—one with a leg of wood, one who dragged his twisted limbs along by the help of a crutch, were hanged in this same Bloomsbury Square. As the cart was about to glide from under them, it was observed that they stood with their faces from, not to, the house they had assisted to despoil; and their misery was protracted that this omission might be remedied. Another boy was hanged in Bow Street; other young lads in various quarters of the town. Four wretched women, too, were put to

death. In a word, those who suffered as rioters were, for the most part, the weakest, meanest, and most miserable among them. It was an exquisite satire upon the false religious cry which had led to so much misery, that some of these people owned themselves to be Catholics, and begged to be attended by their own priests.

One young man was hanged in Bishopsgate Street, whose aged grey-headed father waited for him at the gallows, kissed him at its foot when he arrived, and sat there on the ground until they took him down. They would have given him the body of his child; but he had no hearse, no coffin, nothing to remove it in, being too poor—and walked meekly away beside the cart that took it back to prison, trying as he went to touch its lifeless hand.

But the crowd had forgotten these matters, or cared little about them if they lived in their memory: and, while one great multitude fought and hustled to get near the gibbet before Newgate for a parting look, another followed in the train of poor lost Barnaby, to swell the throng that waited for him on the spot.

#### CHAPTER LXXVIII.



ON the same day, and about this very hour, Mr. Willet the elder sat smoking his pipe in a chamber of the Black Lion. Although it was hot summer weather, Mr. Willet sat close to the fire. He was in a state of profound cogitation with his own thoughts, and it was his custom at such times to stew himself slowly, under the impression that that process of cookery was favourable to the melting out of his ideas, which, when he began to simmer, sometimes oozed forth so copiously as to astonish even himself.

Mr. Willet had been several thousand times comforted by his friends and acquaintance with the assurance that, for the loss he had sustained in the damage done to the Maypole, he could "come upon the county." But as this phrase happened to bear an unfortunate resemblance to the popular expression of "coming on the parish," it suggested to Mr. Willet's mind no more consolatory visions than pauperism on an extensive scale, and ruin in a capacious aspect. Consequently, he had never failed to receive the intelligence with a rueful shake of the head, or a dreary stare, and had been always observed to appear much more melancholy after a visit of

condolence than at any other time in the whole four-and-twenty hours.

It chanced, however, that sitting over the fire on this particular occasion—perhaps because he was, as it were, done to a turn; perhaps because he was in an unusually bright state of mind; perhaps because he had considered the subject so long; perhaps because of all these favouring circumstances taken together—it chanced that, sitting over the fire on this particular occasion, Mr. Willet did, afar off and in the remotest depths of his intellect, perceive a kind of lurking hint or faint suggestion, that out of the public purse there might issue funds for the restoration of the Maypole to its former high place among the taverns of the earth. And this dim ray of light did so diffuse itself within him, and did so kindle up and shine, that at last he had it as plainly and visibly before him as the blaze by which he sat: and fully persuaded that he was the first to make the discovery, and that he had started, hunted down, fallen upon, and knocked on the head a perfectly original idea which had never presented itself to any other man, alive or dead, he laid down his pipe, rubbed his hands, and chuckled audibly.

"Why, father!" cried Joe, entering at the moment, "you're in spirits to-day!"

"It's nothing partickler," said Mr. Willet, chuckling again. "It's nothing at all partickler, Joseph. Tell me something about the Salwanners." Having preferred this request, Mr. Willet chuckled a third time, and, after these unusual demonstrations of levity, he put his pipe in his mouth again.

"What shall I tell you, father?" asked Joe, laying his hand upon his sire's shoulder, and looking down into his face. "That I have come back poorer than a church mouse? You know that. That I have come back maimed and crippled? You know that."

"It was took off," muttered Mr. Willet, with his eyes upon the fire, "at the defence of the Salwanners, in America, where the war is."

"Quite right," returned Joe, smiling, and leaning with his remaining elbow on the back of his father's chair; "the very subject I came to speak to you about. A man with one arm, father, is not of much use in the busy world."

This was one of those vast propositions which Mr. Willet had never considered for an instant, and required time to "tackle." Wherefore he made no answer.

"At all events," said Joe, "he can't pick and choose his means of earning a livelihood, as another man may. He can't say, 'I will turn my hand to this,' or, 'I won't turn my hand to



that, but must take what he can do, and be thankful it's no worse.—What did you say?"

Mr. Willet had been softly repeating to himself, in a musing tone, the words "defence of the Salwanners:" but he seemed embarrassed at having been overheard, and answered "Nothing."

"Now look here, father.—Mr. Edward has come to England from the West Indies. When he was lost sight of (I ran away on the same day, father), he made a voyage to one of the islands, where a school-friend of his had settled; and, finding him, wasn't too proud to be employed on his estate, and—and, in short, got on well, and is prospering, and has come over here on business of his own, and is going back again speedily. Our returning nearly at the same time, and meeting in the course of the late troubles, has been a good thing every way; for it has not only enabled us to do old friends some service, but has opened a path in life for me which I may tread without being a burden upon you. To be plain, father, he can employ me; I have satisfied myself that I can be of real use to him; and I am going to carry my one arm away with him, and to make the most of it."

In the mind's eye of Mr. Willet the West Indies, and, indeed, all foreign countries, were inhabited by savage nations, who were perpetually burying pipes of peace, flourishing tomahawks, and puncturing strange patterns in their bodies. He no sooner heard this announcement, therefore, than he leaned back in his chair, took his pipe from his lips, and stared at his son with as much dismay as if he already beheld him tied to a stake, and tortured for the entertainment of a lively population. In what form of expression his feelings would have found a vent, it is impossible to say. Nor is it necessary: for, before a syllable occurred to him, Dolly Varden came running into the room in tears, threw herself on Joe's breast without a word of explanation, and clasped her white arms round his neck.

"Dolly!" cried Joe. "Dolly!"

"Ay, call me that; call me that always," exclaimed the locksmith's little daughter; "never speak coldly to me, never be distant, never again reprove me for the follies I have long repented, or I shall die, Joe."

"I reprove you!" said Joe.

"Yes—for every kind and honest word you uttered went to my heart. For you, who have borne so much from me—for you, who owe your sufferings and pain to my caprice—for you to be so kind—so noble to me, Joe—"

He could say nothing to her. Not a syllable. There was an odd sort of eloquence in his one

arm, which had crept round her waist: but his lips were mute.

"If you had reminded me by a word—only by one short word," sobbed Dolly, clinging yet closer to him, "how little I deserved that you should treat me with so much forbearance; if you had exulted only for one moment in your triumph, I could have borne it better."

"Triumph!" repeated Joe with a smile which seemed to say, "I am a pretty figure for that."

"Yes, triumph," she cried, with her whole heart and soul in her earnest voice and gushing tears; "for it *is* one. I am glad to think and know it is. I wouldn't be less humbled, dear—I wouldn't be without the recollection of that last time we spoke together in this place—no, not if I could recall the past, and make our parting yesterday."

Did ever lover look as Joe looked now?

"Dear Joe," said Dolly, "I always loved you—in my own heart I always did, although I was so vain and giddy. I hoped you would come back that night. I made quite sure you would. I prayed for it on my knees. Through all these long, long years I have never once forgotten you, or left off hoping that this happy time might come."

The eloquence of Joe's arm surpassed the most impassioned language; and so did that of his lips—yet he said nothing either.

"And now, at last," cried Dolly, trembling with the fervour of her speech, "if you were sick, and shattered in your every limb; if you were ailing, weak, and sorrowful; if, instead of being what you are, you were in everybody's eyes but mine the wreck and ruin of a man; I would be your wife, dear love, with greater pride and joy than if you were the stateliest lord in England!"

"What have I done," cried Joe, "what have I done to meet with this reward?"

"You have taught me," said Dolly, raising her pretty face to his, "to know myself, and your worth; to be something better than I was; to be more deserving of your true and manly nature. In years to come, dear Joe, you shall find that you have done so; for I will be, not only now, when we are young and full of hope, but when we have grown old and weary, your patient, gentle, never-tiring wife. I will never know a wish or care beyond our home and you, and I will always study how to please you with my best affection and my most devoted love. I will: indeed I will!"

Joe could only repeat his former eloquence—but it was very much to the purpose.

"They know of this at home," said Dolly.

"For your sake, I would leave even them; but they know it, and are glad of it, and are as proud of you as I am, and as full of gratitude.—You'll not come and see me as a poor friend who knew me when I was a girl, will you, dear Joe?"

Well, well! It don't matter what Joe said in answer, but he said a great deal; and Dolly said a great deal too: and he folded Dolly in his one arm pretty tight, considering that it was but one; and Dolly made no resistance: and if ever two people were happy in this world—which is not an utterly miserable one, with all its faults—we may, with some appearance of certainty, conclude that they were.

To say that during these proceedings Mr. Willet the elder underwent the greatest emotions of astonishment of which our common nature is susceptible—to say that he was in a perfect paralysis of surprise, and that he wandered into the most stupendous and theretofore unattainable heights of complicated amazement—would be to shadow forth his state of mind in the feeblest and lamest terms. If a roc, an eagle, a griffin, a flying elephant, a winged sea-horse, had suddenly appeared, and, taking him on its back, carried him bodily into the heart of the "Salwanners," it would have been to him as an everyday occurrence in comparison with what he now beheld. To be sitting quietly by, seeing and hearing these things; to be completely overlooked, unnoticed, and disregarded, while his son and a young lady were talking to each other in the most impassioned manner, kissing each other, and making themselves in all respects perfectly at home; was a position so tremendous, so inexplicable, so utterly beyond the widest range of his capacity of comprehension, that he fell into a lethargy of wonder, and could no more rouse himself than an enchanted sleeper in the first year of his fairy lease, a century long.

"Father," said Joe, presenting Dolly, "you know who this is?"

Mr. Willet looked first at her, then at his son, then back again at Dolly, and then made an ineffectual effort to extract a whiff from his pipe, which had gone out long ago.

"Say a word, father, if it's only 'How d'ye do?'" urged Joe.

"Certainly, Joseph," answered Mr. Willet. "Oh yes! Why not?"

"To be sure," said Joe. "Why not?"

"Ah!" replied his father. "Why not?" and with this remark, which he uttered in a low voice, as though he were discussing some grave question with himself, he used the little finger—if any of his fingers can be said to have come

under that denomination—of his right hand as a tobacco-stopper, and was silent again.

And so he sat for half an hour at least, although Dolly, in the most endearing of manners, hoped a dozen times that he was not angry with her. So he sat for half an hour, quite motionless, and looking all the while like nothing so much as a great Dutch Pin or Skittle. At the expiration of that period, he suddenly, and without the least notice, burst (to the great consternation of the young people) into a very loud and very short laugh; and repeating, "Certainly, Joseph. Oh yes! Why not?" went out for a walk.

## CHAPTER LXXIX.



LD John did not walk near the Golden Key, for between the Golden Key and the Black Lion there lay a wilderness of streets—as everybody knows who is acquainted with the relative bearings of Clerkenwell and Whitechapel—and he was by no means famous for pedestrian exercises. But the Golden Key lies in our way, though it was out of his; so to the Golden Key this chapter goes.

The Golden Key itself, fair emblem of the locksmith's trade, had been pulled down by the rioters, and roughly trampled under foot. But now it was hoisted up again in all the glory of a new coat of paint, and showed more bravely even than in days of yore. Indeed, the whole house-front was spruce and trim, and so freshened up throughout, that if there yet remained at large any of the rioters who had been concerned in the attack upon it, the sight of the old, goodly, prosperous dwelling, so revived, must have been to them as gall and wornwood.

The shutters of the shop were closed, however, and the window blinds above were all pulled down, and in place of its usual cheerful appearance, the house had a look of sadness and an air of mourning; which the neighbours, who in old days had often seen poor Barnaby go in and out, were at no loss to understand. The door stood partly open; but the locksmith's hammer was unheard; the cat sat moping on the ashy forge; all was deserted, dark, and silent.

On the threshold of this door Mr. Haredale and Edward Chester met. The younger man gave place; and both passing in with a familiar air, which seemed to denote that they were



tarrying there, or were well accustomed to go to and fro unquestioned, shut it behind them.

Entering the old back-parlour, and ascending the flight of stairs, abrupt and steep, and quaintly fashioned as of old, they turned into the best room; the pride of Mrs. Varden's heart, and erst the scene of Miggs's household labours.

"Varden brought the mother here last evening, he told me?" said Mr. Haredale.

"She is above-stairs now—in the room over here," Edward rejoined. "Her grief, they say, is past all telling. I needn't add—for that you know beforehand, sir—that the care, humanity, and sympathy of these good people have no bounds."

"I am sure of that. Heaven repay them for it, and for much more! Varden is out?"

"He returned with your messenger, who arrived almost at the moment of his coming home himself. He was out the whole night—but that of course you know. He was with you the greater part of it?"

"He was. Without him I should have lacked my right hand. He is an older man than I; but nothing can conquer him."

"The cheeriest, stoutest-hearted fellow in the world."

"He has a right to be. He has a right to be. A better creature never lived. He reaps what he has sown—no more."

"It is not all men," said Edward after a moment's hesitation, "who have the happiness to do that."

"More than you imagine," returned Mr. Haredale. "We note the harvest more than the seed-time. You do so in me."

In truth, his pale and haggard face, and gloomy bearing, had so far influenced the remark, that Edward was, for the moment, at a loss to answer him.

"Tut, tut," said Mr. Haredale, "'twas not very difficult to read a thought so natural. But you are mistaken nevertheless. I have had my share of sorrows—more than the common lot, perhaps—but I have borne them ill. I have broken where I should have bent; and have mused and brooded, when my spirit should have mixed with all God's great creation. The men who learn endurance are they who call the whole world brother. I have turned *from* the world, and I pay the penalty."

Edward would have interposed, but he went on without giving him time.

"It is too late to evade it now. I sometimes think that if I had to live my life once more, I might amend this fault—not so much, I discover when I search my mind, for the love of what is

right, as for my own sake. But, even when I make these better resolutions, I instinctively recoil from the idea of suffering again what I have undergone; and in this circumstance I find the unwelcome assurance that I should still be the same man, though I could cancel the past, and begin anew, with its experience to guide me."

"Nay, you make too sure of that," said Edward.

"You think so," Mr. Haredale answered, "and I am glad you do. I know myself better, and therefore distrust myself more. Let us leave this subject for another—not so far removed from it as it might, at first sight, seem to be. Sir, you still love my niece, and she is still attached to you?"

"I have that assurance from her own lips," said Edward, "and you know—I am sure you know—that I would not exchange it for any blessing life could yield me."

"You are frank, honourable, and disinterested," said Mr. Haredale; "you have forced the conviction that you are so, even on my once-jaundiced mind, and I believe you. Wait here till I come back."

He left the room as he spoke; but soon returned with his niece.

"On that first and only time," he said, looking from the one to the other, "when we three stood together under her father's roof, I told you to quit it, and charged you never to return."

"It is the only circumstance arising out of our love," observed Edward, "that I have forgotten."

"You own a name," said Mr. Haredale, "I had deep reason to remember. I was moved and goaded by recollections of personal wrong and injury, I know, but even now I cannot charge myself with having, then or ever, lost sight of a heartfelt desire for her true happiness; or with having acted—however much I was mistaken—with any other impulse than the one pure, single, earnest wish to be to her, as far as in my inferior nature lay, the father she had lost."

"Dear uncle," cried Emma, "I have known no parent but you. I have loved the memory of others, but I have loved you all my life. Never was father kinder to his child than you have been to me, without the interval of one harsh hour, since I can first remember."

"You speak too fondly," he answered, "and yet I cannot wish you were less partial; for I have a pleasure in hearing those words, and shall have in calling them to mind when we are far asunder, which nothing else could give me. Bear with me for a moment longer, Edward, for

she and I have been together many years ; and although I believe that in resigning her to you I put the seal upon her future happiness, I find it needs an effort."

He pressed her tenderly to his bosom, and after a minute's pause resumed :

"I have done you wrong, sir, and I ask your forgiveness—in no common phrase, or show of sorrow ; but with earnestness and sincerity. In the same spirit, I acknowledge to you both that the time has been when I connived at treachery and falsehood—which, if I did not perpetrate myself, I still permitted—to rend you two asunder."

"You judge yourself too harshly," said Edward. "Let these things rest."

"They rise up in judgment against me when I look back, and not now for the first time," he answered. "I cannot part from you without your full forgiveness ; for busy life and I have little left in common now, and I have regrets enough to carry into solitude, without addition to the stock."

"You bear a blessing from us both," said Emma. "Never mingle thoughts of me—of me who owe you so much love and duty—with anything but undying affection and gratitude for the past, and bright hopes for the future."

"The future," returned her uncle with a melancholy smile, "is a bright word for you, and its image should be wreathed with cheerful hopes. Mine is of another kind, but it will be one of peace, and free, I trust, from care or passion. When you quit England I shall leave it too. There are cloisters abroad ; and now that the two great objects of my life are set at rest, I know no better home. You droop at that, forgetting I am growing old, and that my course is nearly run. Well, we will speak of it again—not once or twice, but many times ; and you shall give me cheerful counsel, Emma."

"And you will take it?" asked his niece.

"I'll listen to it," he answered with a kiss, "and it will have its weight, be certain. What have I left to say? You have, of late, been much together. It is better and more fitting that the circumstances attendant on the past, which wrought your separation, and sowed between you suspicion and distrust, should not be entered on by me."

"Much, much better," whispered Emma.

"I avow my share in them," said Mr. Haredale, "though I held it, at the time, in detestation. Let no man turn aside, ever so slightly, from the broad path of honour, on the plausible pretence that he is justified by the goodness of his end. All good ends can be worked out by

good means. Those that cannot are bad ; and may be counted so at once, and left alone."

He looked from her to Edward, and said in a gentler tone :

"In goods and fortune you are now nearly equal. I have been her faithful steward, and to that remnant of a richer property which my brother left her, I desire to add, in token of my love, a poor pittance, scarcely worth the mention, for which I have no longer any need. I am glad you go abroad. Let our ill-fated house remain the ruin it is. When you return, after a few thriving years, you will command a better and a more fortunate one. We are friends?"

Edward took his extended hand, and grasped it heartily.

"You are neither slow nor cold in your response," said Mr. Haredale, doing the like by him, "and when I look upon you now, and know you, I feel that I would choose you for her husband. Her father had a generous nature, and you would have pleased him well. I give her to you in his name, and with his blessing. If the world and I part in this act, we part on happier terms than we have lived for many a day."

He placed her in his arms, and would have left the room, but that he was stopped in his passage to the door by a great noise at a distance, which made them start and pause.

It was a loud shouting, mingled with boisterous acclamations, that rent the very air. It drew nearer and nearer every moment, and approached so rapidly that, even while they listened, it burst into a deafening confusion of sounds at the street corner.

"This must be stopped—quieted," said Mr. Haredale hastily. "We should have foreseen this, and provided against it. I will go out to them at once."

But, before he could reach the door, and before Edward could catch up his hat and follow him, they were again arrested by a loud shriek from above-stairs : and the locksmith's wife, bursting in, and fairly running into Mr. Haredale's arms, cried out :

"She knows it all, dear sir!—she knows it all! We broke it out to her by degrees, and she is quite prepared." Having made this communication, and furthermore thanked Heaven with great fervour and heartiness, the good lady, according to the custom of matrons on all occasions of excitement, fainted away directly.

They ran to the window, threw up the sash, and looked into the crowded street. Among a dense mob of persons, of whom not one was for an instant still, the locksmith's ruddy face and



burly form could be descried, beating about as though he was struggling with a rough sea. Now he was carried back a score of yards, now onward nearly to the door, now back again, now forced against the opposite houses, now against those adjoining his own: now carried up a flight of steps, and greeted by the outstretched hands of half a hundred men, while the whole tumultuous concourse stretched their throats, and cheered with all their might. Though he was

really in a fair way to be torn to pieces in the general enthusiasm, the locksmith, nothing discomposed, echoed their shouts till he was hoarse as they, and, in a glow of joy and right good-humour, waved his hat until the daylight shone between its brim and crown.

But in all the bandyings from hand to hand, and strivings to and fro, and sweepings here and there, which—saving that he looked more jolly and more radiant after every struggle—troubled



“THE LOCKSMITH’S RUDDY FACE AND BURLY FORM COULD BE DESCRIED, BEATING ABOUT AS THOUGH HE WAS STRUGGLING WITH A ROUGH SEA.”

his peace of mind no more than if he had been a straw upon the water’s surface, he never once released his firm grasp of an arm, drawn tight through his. He sometimes turned to clap this friend upon the back, or whisper in his ear a word of staunch encouragement, or cheer him with a smile; but his great care was to shield him from the pressure, and force a passage for him to the Golden Key. Passive and timid, scared, pale, and wondering, and gazing at the BARNABY RUDGE, 21.

throng as if he were newly risen from the dead, and felt himself a ghost among the living, Barnaby—not Barnaby in the spirit, but in flesh and blood, with pulses, sinews, nerves, and beating heart, and strong affections—clung to his stout old friend, and followed where he led.

And thus, in course of time, they reached the door, held ready for their entrance by no unwilling hands. Then slipping in, and shutting out the crowd by main force, Gabriel stood be-

tween Mr. Haredale and Edward Chester, and Barnaby, rushing up the stairs, fell upon his knees beside his mother's bed.

"Such is the blessed end, sir," cried the panting locksmith to Mr. Haredale, "of the best day's work we ever did. The rogues! it's been hard fighting to get away from 'em. I almost thought, once or twice, they'd have been too much for us with their kindness!"

They had striven, all the previous day, to rescue Barnaby from his impending fate. Failing in their attempts in the first quarter to which they addressed themselves, they renewed them in another. Failing there likewise, they began afresh at midnight; and made their way, not only to the judge and jury who had tried him, but to men of influence at court, to the young Prince of Wales, and even to the ante-chamber of the king himself. Successful, at last, in awakening an interest in his favour, and an inclination to inquire more dispassionately into his case, they had had an interview with the minister, in his bed, so late as eight o'clock that morning. The result of a searching inquiry (in which they, who had known the poor fellow from his childhood, did other good service besides bringing it about) was, that between eleven and twelve o'clock a free pardon to Barnaby Rudge was made out and signed, and intrusted to a horse-soldier for instant conveyance to the place of execution. This courier reached the spot just as the cart appeared in sight; and Barnaby being carried back to gaol, Mr. Haredale, assured that all was safe, had gone straight from Bloomsbury Square to the Golden Key, leaving to Gabriel the grateful task of bringing him home in triumph.

"I needn't say," observed the locksmith when he had shaken hands with all the males in the house, and hugged all the females five-and-forty times at least, "that, except among ourselves, I didn't want to make a triumph of it. But, directly we got into the street, we were known, and this hubbub began. Of the two," he added as he wiped his crimson face, "and after experience of both, I think I'd rather be taken out of my house by a crowd of enemies, than escorted home by a mob of friends!"

It was plain enough, however, that this was mere talk on Gabriel's part, and that the whole proceeding afforded him the keenest delight; for the people continuing to make a great noise without, and to cheer as if their voices were in the freshest order, and good for a fortnight, he sent up-stairs for Grip (who had come home at his master's back, and had acknowledged the favours of the multitude by drawing blood from every finger that came within his reach), and

with the bird upon his arm, presented himself at the first-floor window, and waved his hat again until it dangled by a shred between his fingers and thumb. This demonstration having been received with appropriate shouts, and silence being in some degree restored, he thanked them for their sympathy; and taking the liberty to inform them that there was a sick person in the house, proposed that they should give three cheers for King George, three more for Old England, and three more for nothing particular, as a closing ceremony. The crowd assenting, substituted Gabriel Varden for the nothing particular; and giving him one over, for good measure, dispersed in high good-humour.

What congratulations were exchanged among the inmates at the Golden Key when they were left alone; what an overflowing of joy and happiness there was among them; how incapable it was of expression in Barnaby's own person; and how he went wildly from one to another, until he became so far tranquillised as to stretch himself on the ground beside his mother's couch, and fall into a deep sleep; are matters that need not be told. And it is well they happened to be of this class, for they would be very hard to tell, were their narration ever so indispensable.

Before leaving this bright picture, it may be well to glance at a dark and very different one which was presented to only a few eyes that same night.

The scene was a churchyard; the time, midnight; the persons, Edward Chester, a clergyman, a grave-digger, and the four bearers of a homely coffin. They stood about a grave which had been newly dug, and one of the bearers held up a dim lantern—the only light there—which shed its feeble ray upon the book of prayer. He placed it for a moment on the coffin, when he and his companions were about to lower it down. There was no inscription on the lid.

The mould fell solemnly upon the last house of this nameless man; and the rattling dust left a dismal echo even in the accustomed ears of those who had borne it to its resting-place. The grave was filled in to the top, and trodden down. They all left the spot together.

"You never saw him living?" asked the clergyman of Edward.

"Often, years ago; not knowing him for my brother."

"Never since?"

"Never. Yesterday he steadily refused to see me. It was urged upon him many times, at my desire."

"Still he refused? That was hardened and unnatural."



"Do you think so?"

"I infer that you do not?"

"You are right. We hear the world wonder, every day, at monsters of ingratitude. Did it never occur to you that it often looks for monsters of affection, as though they were things of course?"

They had reached the gate by this time, and, bidding each other good night, departed on their separate ways.

### CHAPTER LXXX.

**T**HAT afternoon, when he had slept off his fatigue; had shaved, and washed, and dressed, and freshened himself from top to toe; when he had dined, comforted himself with a pipe, an extra Toby, a nap in the great arm-chair, and a quiet chat with Mrs. Varden on everything that had happened, was happening, or about to happen, within the sphere of their domestic concern; the locksmith sat himself down at the tea-table in the little back-parlour: the rosiest, cosiest, merriest, heartiest, best-contented old buck in Great Britain, or out of it.

There he sat, with his beaming eye on Mrs. V., and his shining face suffused with gladness, and his capacious waistcoat smiling in every wrinkle, and his jovial humour peeping from under the table in the very plumpness of his legs: a sight to turn the vinegar of misanthropy into purest milk of human kindness. There he sat, watching his wife as she decorated the room with flowers for the greater honour of Dolly and Joseph Willet, who had gone out walking, and for whom the tea-kettle had been singing gaily on the hob full twenty minutes, chirping as never kettle chirped before; for whom the best service of real undoubted china, patterned with divers round-faced mandarins holding up broad umbrellas, was now displayed in all its glory; to tempt whose appetites a clear, transparent, juicy ham, garnished with cool green lettuce-leaves and fragrant cucumber, reposed upon a shady table, covered with a snow-white cloth; for whose delight, preserves and jams, crisp cakes and other pastry, short to eat, with cunning twists, and cottage loaves, and rolls of bread both white and brown, were all set forth in rich profusion; in whose youth Mrs. V. herself had grown quite young, and stood there in a gown of red and white: symmetrical in figure, buxom in bodice, ruddy in cheek and lip, faultless in ankle, laugh-

ing in face and mood, in all respects delicious to behold—there sat the locksmith among all and every these delights, the sun that shone upon them all: the centre of the system: the source of light, heat, life, and frank enjoyment in the bright household world.

And when had Dolly ever been the Dolly of that afternoon? To see how she came in arm-in-arm with Joe; and how she made an effort not to blush, or seem at all confused; and how she made believe she didn't care to sit on his side of the table; and how she coaxed the locksmith in a whisper not to joke; and how her colour came and went in a little restless flutter of happiness, which made her do everything wrong, and yet so charmingly wrong that it was better than right!—why, the locksmith could have looked on at this (as he mentioned to Mrs. Varden when they retired for the night) for four-and-twenty hours at a stretch, and never wished it done.

The recollections, too, with which they made merry over that long-protracted tea! The glee with which the locksmith asked Joe if he remembered that stormy night at the Maypole when he first asked after Dolly—the laugh they all had about that night when she was going out to the party in the sedan-chair—the unmerciful manner in which they rallied Mrs. Varden about putting those flowers outside that very window—the difficulty Mrs. Varden found in joining the laugh against herself at first, and the extraordinary perception she had of the joke when she overcame it—the confidential statements of Joe concerning the precise day and hour when he was first conscious of being fond of Dolly, and Dolly's blushing admissions, half volunteered and half extorted, as to the time from which she dated the discovery that she "didn't mind" Joe—here was an exhaustless fund of mirth and conversation!

Then, there was a great deal to be said regarding Mrs. Varden's doubts, and motherly alarms, and shrewd suspicions: and it appeared that from Mrs. Varden's penetration and extreme sagacity nothing had ever been hidden. She had known it all along. She had seen it from the first. She had always predicted it. She had been aware of it before the principals. She had said within herself (for she remembered the exact words) "that young Willet is certainly looking after our Dolly, and I must look after *him*." Accordingly, she had looked after him, and had observed many little circumstances (all of which she named) so exceedingly minute that nobody else could make anything out of them even now; and had, it seemed, from first to last,

displayed the most unbounded tact and most consummate generalship.

Of course the night when Joe *would* ride homeward by the side of the chaise, and when Mrs. Varden *would* insist upon his going back again, was not forgotten—nor the night when Dolly fainted on his name being mentioned—nor the times upon times when Mrs. Varden, ever watchful and prudent, had found her pining in her own chamber. In short, nothing was forgotten; and everything, by some means or other, brought them back to the conclusion, that that was the happiest hour in all their lives; consequently, that everything must have occurred for the best, and nothing could be suggested which would have made it better.

While they were in the full glow of such discourse as this, there came a startling knock at the door opening from the street into the workshop, which had been kept closed all day that the house might be more quiet. Joe, as in duty bound, would hear of nobody but himself going to open it; and accordingly left the room for that purpose.

It would have been odd enough, certainly, if Joe had forgotten the way to this door; and even if he had, as it was a pretty large one and stood straight before him, he could not easily have missed it. But Dolly, perhaps because she was in the flutter of spirits before mentioned, or perhaps because she thought he would not be able to open it with his one arm—she could have had no other reason—hurried out after him; and they stopped so long in the passage—no doubt owing to Joe's entreaties that she would not expose herself to the draught of July air which must infallibly come rushing in on this same door being opened—that the knock was repeated, in a yet more startling manner than before.

"Is anybody going to open that door?" cried the locksmith. "Or shall I come?"

Upon that, Dolly went running back into the parlour, all dimples and blushes; and Joe opened it with a mighty noise, and other superfluous demonstrations of being in a violent hurry.

"Well," said the locksmith when he reappeared: "what is it? eh, Joe? What are you laughing at?"

"Nothing, sir. It's coming in."

"Who's coming in? what's coming in?" Mrs. Varden, as much at a loss as her husband, could only shake her head in answer to his inquiring look: so, the locksmith wheeled his chair round to command a better view of the room-door, and stared at it with his eyes wide open, and a min-

gled expression of curiosity and wonder shining in his jolly face.

Instead of some person or persons straightway appearing, divers remarkable sounds were heard, first in the workshop and afterwards in the little dark passage between it and the parlour, as though some unwieldy chest or heavy piece of furniture were being brought in by an amount of human strength inadequate to the task. At length, after much struggling and bumping, and bruising of the wall on both sides, the door was forced open as by a battering-ram; and the locksmith, steadily regarding what appeared beyond, smote his thigh, elevated his eyebrows, opened his mouth, and cried in a loud voice expressive of the utmost consternation:

"Dammé, if it an't Miggs come back!"

The young damsel whom he named no sooner heard these words than, deserting a very small boy and a very large box by which she was accompanied, and advancing with such precipitation that her bonnet flew off her head, burst into the room, clasped her hands (in which she held a pair of pattens, one in each), raised her eyes devotedly to the ceiling, and shed a flood of tears.

"The old story!" cried the locksmith, looking at her in inexpressible desperation. "She was born to be a damper, this young woman! Nothing can prevent it!"

"Ho, master! ho, mim!" cried Miggs, "can I constrain my feelings in these here once agin united moments? Oh, Mr. Warsen, here's blessedness among relations, sir! Here's forgiveness of injuries, here's amicableness!"

The locksmith looked from his wife to Dolly, and from Dolly to Joe, and from Joe to Miggs, with his eyebrows still elevated, and his mouth still open. When his eyes got back to Miggs, they rested on her; fascinated.

"To think," cried Miggs with hysterical joy, "that Mr. Joe, and dear Miss Dolly, has raly come together after all as has been said and done contrary! To see them two a settin' along with him and her, so pleasant, and in all respects so affable and mild; and me not knowing of it, and not being in the ways to make no preparations for their teas. Ho, what a cutting thing it is, and yet what sweet sensations is awake within me!"

Either in clasping her hands again, or in an ecstasy of pious joy, Miss Miggs clinked her pattens after the manner of a pair of cymbals at this juncture; and then resumed, in the softest accents:

"And did my missis think—ho, goodness, did she think—as her own Miggs, which supported her under so many trials, and understood her



natur' when them as intended well but acted rough went so deep into her feelings—did she think as her own Miggs would ever leave her? Did she think as Miggs, though she was but a servant, and knowed that servitudes was no inheritances, would forgit that she was the humble instruments as always made it comfortable between them two when they fell out, and always told master of the meekness and forgiveness of her blessed dispositions? Did she think as Miggs had no attachments? Did she think that wages was her only object?"

To none of these interrogatories, whereof every one was more pathetically delivered than the last, did Mrs. Varden answer one word: but Miggs, not at all abashed by this circumstance, turned to the small boy in attendance—her eldest nephew—son of her own married sister—born in Golden Lion Court, number twenty-sivin, and bred in the very shadow of the second bell-handle on the right-hand door-post—and, with a plentiful use of her pocket-handkerchief, addressed herself to him; requesting that, on his return home, he would console his parents for the loss of her, his aunt, by delivering to them a faithful statement of his having left her in the bosom of that family with which, as his aforesaid parents well knew, her best affections were incorporated; that he would remind them that nothing less than her imperious sense of duty, and devoted attachment to her old master and missis, likewise Miss Dolly and young Mr. Joe, should ever have induced her to decline that pressing invitation which they, his parents, had, as he could testify, given her to lodge and board with them, free of all cost and charge, for evermore; lastly, that he would help her with her box up-stairs, and then repair straight home, bearing her blessing and her strong injunctions to mingle in his prayers a supplication that he might, in course of time, grow up a locksmith, or a Mr. Joe, and have Mrs. Vardens and Miss Dollys for his relations and friends.

Having brought this admonition to an end,—upon which, to say the truth, the young gentleman for whose benefit it was designed bestowed little or no heed, having, to all appearance, his faculties absorbed in the contemplation of the sweetmeats,—Miss Miggs signified to the company in general that they were not to be uneasy, for she would soon return; and, with her nephew's aid, prepared to bear her wardrobe up the staircase.

"My dear," said the locksmith to his wife, "do you desire this?"

"I desire it!" she answered. "I am astonished

—I am amazed—at her audacity. Let her leave the house this moment."

Miggs, hearing this, let her end of the box fall heavily to the floor, gave a very loud sniff, crossed her arms, screwed down the corners of her mouth, and cried in an ascending scale, "Ho, good gracious!" three distinct times.

"You hear what your mistress says, my love," remarked the locksmith. "You had better go, I think. Stay; take this with you, for the sake of old service."

Miss Miggs clutched the bank note he took from his pocket-book and held out to her; deposited it in a small, red leather purse; put the purse in her pocket (displaying, as she did so, a considerable portion of some under garment, made of flannel, and more black cotton stocking than is commonly seen in public); and, tossing her head as she looked at Mrs. Varden, repeated—

"Ho, good gracious!"

"I think you said that once before, my dear," observed the locksmith.

"Times is changed, is they, mim?" cried Miggs, bridling. "You can spare me now, can you? You can keep 'em down without me? You're not in wants of any one to scold, or throw the blame upon, no longer, an't you, mim? I'm glad to find you've grown so independent. I wish you joy, I'm sure!"

With that she dropped a curtsy, and keeping her head erect, her ear towards Mrs. Varden, and her eye on the rest of the company as she alluded to them in her remarks, proceeded:

"I'm quite delighted, I'm sure, to find sich independency, feeling sorry though, at the same time, mim, that you should have been forced into submissions when you couldn't help yourself—he, he, he! It must be great vexations, 'specially considering how ill you always spoke of Mr. Joe, to have him for a son-in-law at last; and I wonder Miss Dolly can put up with him either, after being off and on for so many years with a coachmaker. But I *have* heard say that the coachmaker thought twice about it—he, he, he!—and that he told a young man as was a friend of his, that he hoped he knowed better than to be drawn into that; though she and all the family *did* pull uncommon strong!"

Here she paused for a reply, and receiving none, went on as before.

"I *have* heard say, mim, that the illness of some ladies was all pretensions, and that they could faint away, stone dead, whenever they had the inclinations so to do. Of course I never see sich cases with my own eyes—ho no! He, he, he! Nor master neither—ho no! He, he, he! I *have* heard the neighbours make remark

as some one as they was acquainted with was a poor, good-natur'd, mean-spirited crectur, as went out fishing for a wife one day, and caught a Tartar. Of course I never to my knowledge see the poor person himself. Nor did you neither, mim—ho no! I wonder who it can be—don't you, mim? No doubt you do, mim. Ho yes! He, he, he!"

Again Miggs paused for a reply; and none being offered, was so oppressed with teeming spite and spleen, that she seemed like to burst.

"I'm glad Miss Dolly can laugh," cried Miggs with a feeble titter. "I like to see folks a laughing—so do you, mim, don't you? You was always glad to see people in spirits, wasn't you, mim? And you always did your best to keep 'em cheerful, didn't you, mim? Though there an't such a great deal to laugh at now, either; is there, mim? It an't so much of a catch, after looking out so sharp ever since she was a little chit, and costing such a deal in dress and show, to get a poor common soldier, with one arm, is it, mim? He, he! I wouldn't have a husband with one arm, anyways. I would have two arms. I would have two arms, if it was me, though instead of hands they'd only got hooks at the end, like our dustman!"

Miss Miggs was about to add, and had, indeed, begun to add, that, taking them in the abstract, dustmen were far more eligible matches than soldiers, though, to be sure, when people were past choosing, they must take the best they could get, and think themselves well off too; but her vexation and chagrin being of that internally bitter sort which finds no relief in words, and is aggravated to madness by want of contradiction, she could hold out no longer, and burst into a storm of sobs and tears.

In this extremity she fell on the unlucky nephew, tooth and nail, and plucking a handful of hair from his head, demanded to know how long she was to stand there to be insulted, and whether or no he meant to help her to carry out the box again, and if he took a pleasure in hearing his family reviled: with other inquiries of that nature; at which disgrace and provocation, the small boy, who had been all this time gradually lashed into rebellion by the sight of unattainable pastry, walked off indignant, leaving his aunt and the box to follow at their leisure. Somehow or other, by dint of pushing and pulling, they did attain the street at last; where Miss Miggs, all blowzed with the exertion of getting there, and with her sobs and tears, sat down upon her property to rest and grieve, until she could ensnare some other youth to help her home.

"It's a thing to laugh at, Martha, not to care for," whispered the locksmith as he followed his wife to the window, and good-humouredly dried her eyes. "What does it matter? You had seen your fault before. Come! Bring up Toby again, my dear; Dolly shall sing us a song; and we'll be all the merrier for this interruption!"

## CHAPTER LXXXI.

**A**NOTHER month had passed, and the end of August had nearly come, when Mr. Haredale stood alone in the mail-coach office at Bristol. Although but a few weeks had intervened since his conversation with Edward Chester and his niece in the locksmith's house, and he had made no change, in the meantime, in his accustomed style of dress, his appearance was greatly altered. He looked much older, and more careworn. Agitation and anxiety of mind scatter wrinkles and grey hairs with no unsparing hand; but deeper traces follow on the silent uprooting of old habits, and severing of dear, familiar ties. The affections may not be so easily wounded as the passions, but their hurts are deeper and more lasting. He was now a solitary man, and the heart within him was dreary and lonesome.

He was not the less alone for having spent so many years in seclusion and retirement. This was no better preparation than a round of social cheerfulness: perhaps it even increased the keenness of his sensibility. He had been so dependent upon her for companionship and love; she had come to be so much a part and parcel of his existence; they had had so many cares and thoughts in common, which no one else had shared; that losing her was beginning life anew, and being required to summon up the hope and elasticity of youth amid the doubts, distrusts, and weakened energies of age.

The effort he had made to part from her with seeming cheerfulness and hope—and they had parted only yesterday—left him the more depressed. With these feelings, he was about to revisit London for the last time, and look once more upon the walls of their old home, before turning his back upon it for ever.

The journey was a very different one, in those days, from what the present generation find it; but it came to an end, as the longest journey will, and he stood again in the streets of the metropolis. He lay at the inn where the coach



stopped, and resolved, before he went to bed, that he would make his arrival known to no one; would spend but another night in London; and would spare himself the pang of parting, even with the honest locksmith.

Such conditions of the mind as that to which he was a prey when he lay down to rest are favourable to the growth of disordered fancies and uneasy visions. He knew this, even in the horror with which he started from his first sleep, and threw up the window to dispel it by the presence of some object, beyond the room, which had not been, as it were, the witness of his dream. But it was not a new terror of the night; it had been present to him before, in many shapes; it had haunted him in bygone times, and visited his pillow again and again. If it had been but an ugly object, a childish spectre, haunting his sleep, its return, in its old form, might have awakened a momentary sensation of fear, which, almost in the act of waking, would have passed away. This disquiet, however, lingered about him, and would yield to nothing. When he closed his eyes again, he felt it hovering near; as he slowly sunk into a slumber, he was conscious of its gathering strength and purpose, and gradually assuming its recent shape; when he sprang up from his bed, the same phantom vanished from his heated brain, and left him filled with a dread, against which reason and waking thought were powerless.

The sun was up before he could shake it off. He rose late, but not refreshed, and remained within doors all that day. He had a fancy for paying his last visit to the old spot in the evening, for he had been accustomed to walk there at that season, and desired to see it under the aspect that was most familiar to him. At such an hour as would afford him time to reach it a little before sunset, he left the inn, and turned into the busy street.

He had not gone far, and was thoughtfully making his way among the noisy crowd, when he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and turning, recognised one of the waiters from the inn, who begged his pardon, but he had left his sword behind him.

"Why have you brought it to me?" he asked, stretching out his hand, and yet not taking it from the man, but looking at him in a disturbed and agitated manner.

The man was sorry to have disoblged him, and would carry it back again. The gentleman had said that he was going a little way into the country, and that he might not return until late. The roads were not very safe for single travellers after dark; and since the riots, gentlemen had

been more careful than ever not to trust themselves unarmed in lonely places. "We thought you were a stranger, sir," he added, "and that you might believe our roads to be better than they are; but perhaps you know them well, and carry fire-arms——"

He took the sword, and putting it up at his side, thanked the man, and resumed his walk.

It was long remembered that he did this in a manner so strange, and with such a trembling hand, that the messenger stood looking after his retreating figure, doubtful whether he ought not to follow, and watch him. It was long remembered that he had been heard pacing his bedroom in the dead of the night; that the attendants had mentioned to each other, in the morning, how fevered and how pale he looked; and that when this man went back to the inn, he told a fellow-servant that what he had observed in this short interview lay very heavy on his mind, and that he feared the gentleman intended to destroy himself, and would never come back alive.

With a half-consciousness that his manner had attracted the man's attention (remembering the expression of his face when they parted), Mr. Haredale quickened his steps; and arriving at a stand of coaches, bargained with the driver of the best to carry him so far on his road as the point where the footway struck across the fields, and to await his return at a house of entertainment which was within a stone's throw of that place. Arriving there in due course, he alighted and pursued his way on foot.

He passed so near the Maypole that he could see its smoke rising from among the trees, while a flock of pigeons—some of its old inhabitants, doubtless—sailed gaily home to roost, between him and the unclouded sky. "The old house will brighten up now," he said as he looked towards it, "and there will be a merry fireside beneath its ivied roof. It is some comfort to know that everything will not be blighted hereabouts. I shall be glad to have one picture of life and cheerfulness to turn to in my mind!"

He resumed his walk, and bent his steps towards the Warren. It was a clear, calm, silent evening, with hardly a breath of wind to stir the leaves, or any sound to break the stillness of the time, but drowsy sheep-bells tinkling in the distance, and, at intervals, the far-off lowing of cattle, or bark of village dogs. The sky was radiant with the softened glory of sunset; and on the earth, and in the air, a deep repose prevailed. At such an hour he arrived at the deserted mansion which had been his home so long, and looked for the last time upon its blackened walls.

The ashes of the commonest fire are melan-



choly things, for in them there is an image of death and ruin,—of something that has been bright, and is but dull, cold, dreary dust,—with which our nature forces us to sympathise. How much more sad the crumbled embers of a home; the casting down of that great altar, where the worst among us sometimes perform the worship of the heart; and where the best have offered up such sacrifices, and done such deeds of heroism, as, chronicled, would put the proudest temples of old Time, with all their vaunting annals, to the blush!

He roused himself from a long train of meditation, and walked slowly round the house. It was by this time almost dark.

He had nearly made the circuit of the building when he uttered a half-suppressed exclamation, started, and stood still. Reclining, in an easy attitude, with his back against a tree, and contemplating the ruin with an expression of pleasure,—a pleasure so keen that it overcame his habitual indolence and command of feature, and displayed itself utterly free from all restraint or reserve,—before him, on his own ground, and



“RECLINING, IN AN EASY ATTITUDE, WITH HIS BACK AGAINST A TREE, AND CONTEMPLATING THE RUIN WITH AN EXPRESSION OF PLEASURE.”

triumphing then, as he had triumphed in every misfortune and disappointment of his life, stood the man whose presence, of all mankind, in any place, and least of all in that, he could the least endure.

Although his blood so rose against this man, and his wrath so stirred within him, that he could have struck him dead, he put such fierce constraint upon himself that he passed him without a word or look. Yes, and he would have gone on, and not turned, though to resist the Devil who poured such hot temptation in his brain,

required an effort scarcely to be achieved, if this man had not himself summoned him to stop: and that with an assumed compassion in his voice which drove him well-nigh mad, and in an instant routed all the self-command it had been anguish—acute, poignant anguish—to sustain.

All consideration, reflection, mercy, forbearance; everything by which a goaded man can curb his rage and passion; fled from him as he turned back. And yet he said, slowly and quite calmly—far more calmly than he had ever spoken to him before:



"Why have you called to me?"

"To remark," said Sir John Chester with his wonted composure, "what an odd chance it is that we should meet here."

"It is a strange chance."

"Strange! The most remarkable and singular thing in the world. I never ride in the evening; I have not done so for years. The whim seized me, quite unaccountably, in the middle of last night.—How very picturesque this is!"—He pointed, as he spoke, to the dismantled house, and raised his glass to his eye.

"You praise your own work very freely."

Sir John let fall his glass: inclined his face towards him with an air of the most courteous inquiry; and slightly shook his head as though he were remarking to himself, "I fear this animal is going mad!"

"I say you praise your own work very freely," repeated Mr. Haredale.

"Work!" echoed Sir John, looking smilingly round. "Mine!—I beg your pardon, I really beg your pardon——"

"Why, you see," said Mr. Haredale, "those walls. You see those tottering gables. You see on every side where fire and smoke have raged. You see the destruction that has been wanton here. Do you not?"

"My good friend," returned the knight, gently checking his impatience with his hand, "of course I do. I see everything you speak of, when you stand aside, and do not interpose yourself between the view and me. I am very sorry for you. If I had not had the pleasure to meet you here, I think I should have written to tell you so. But you don't bear it as well as I had expected—excuse me—no, you don't indeed."

He pulled out his snuff-box, and addressing him with the superior air of a man who, by reason of his higher nature, has a right to read a moral lesson to another, continued:

"For you are a philosopher, you know—one of that stern and rigid school who are far above the weaknesses of mankind in general. You are removed, a long way, from the frailties of the crowd. You contemplate them from a height, and rail at them with a most impressive bitterness. I have heard you."

"—And shall again," said Mr. Haredale.

"Thank you," returned the other. "Shall we walk as we talk? The damp falls rather heavily. Well,—as you please. But I grieve to say that I can spare you only a very few moments."

"I would," said Mr. Haredale, "you had spared me none. I would, with all my soul, you had been in Paradise (if such a monstrous lie could be enacted), rather than here to-night."

"Nay," returned the other—"really—you do yourself injustice. You are a rough companion, but I would not go so far to avoid you."

"Listen to me," said Mr. Haredale. "Listen to me."

"While you rail?" inquired Sir John.

"While I deliver your infamy. You urged and stimulated to do your work a fit agent, but one who in his nature—in the very essence of his being—is a traitor, and who has been false to you (despite the sympathy you two should have together), as he has been to all others. With hints, and looks, and crafty words, which told again are nothing, you set on Gashford to this work—this work before us now. With these same hints, and looks, and crafty words, which told again are nothing, you urged him on to gratify the deadly hate he owes me—I have earned it, I thank Heaven—by the abduction and dishonour of my niece. You did. I see denial in your looks," he cried, abruptly pointing in his face, and stepping back, "and denial is a lie!"

He had his hand upon his sword; but the knight, with a contemptuous smile, replied to him as coldly as before.

"You will take notice, sir—if you can discriminate sufficiently—that I have taken the trouble to deny nothing. Your discernment is hardly fine enough for the perusal of faces not of a kind as coarse as your speech; nor has it ever been, that I remember; or, in one face that I could name, you would have read indifference, not to say disgust, somewhat sooner than you did. I speak of a long time ago,—but you understand me."

"Disguise it as you will, you mean denial. Denial explicit or reserved, expressed or left to be inferred, is still a lie. You say you don't deny. Do you admit?"

"You yourself," returned Sir John, suffering the current of his speech to flow as smoothly as if it had been stemmed by no one word of interruption, "publicly proclaimed the character of the gentleman in question (I think it was in Westminster Hall) in terms which relieve me from the necessity of making any farther allusion to him. You may have been warranted; you may not have been; I can't say. Assuming the gentleman to be what you described, and to have made to you or any other person any statements that may have happened to suggest themselves to him, for the sake of his own security, or for the sake of money, or for his own amusement, or for any other consideration,—I have nothing to say of him, except that his extremely degrading situation appears to me to be shared

with his employers. You are so very plain yourself, that you will excuse a little freedom in me, I am sure."

"Attend to me again, Sir John—but once," cried Mr. Haredale. "In your every look, and word, and gesture, you tell me this was not your act. I tell you that it was, and that you tampered with the man I speak of, and with your wretched son (whom God forgive!) to do this deed. You talk of degradation and character. You told me once that you had purchased the absence of the poor idiot and his mother, when (as I have discovered since, and then suspected) you had gone to tempt them, and had found them flown. To you I traced the insinuation that I alone reaped any harvest from my brother's death; and all the foul attacks and whispered calumnies that followed in its train. In every action of my life, from that first hope which you converted into grief and desolation, you have stood, like an adverse fate, between me and peace. In all, you have ever been the same cold-blooded, hollow, false, unworthy villain. For the second time, and for the last, I cast these charges in your teeth, and spurn you from me as I would a faithless dog!"

With that, he raised his arm, and struck him on the breast so that he staggered. Sir John, the instant he recovered, drew his sword, threw away the scabbard and his hat, and running on his adversary, made a desperate lunge at his heart, which, but that his guard was quick and true, would have stretched him dead upon the grass.

In the act of striking him, the torrent of his opponent's rage had reached a stop. He parried his rapid thrusts, without returning them, and called to him, with a frantic kind of terror in his face, to keep back.

"Not to-night! not to-night!" he cried. "In God's name, not to-night!"

Seeing that he lowered his weapon, and that he would not thrust in turn, Sir John lowered his.

"Not to-night!" his adversary cried. "Be warned in time!"

"You told me—it must have been in a sort of inspiration," said Sir John, quite deliberately, though now he dropped his mask, and showed his hatred in his face—"that this was the last time. Be assured it is! Did you believe our last meeting was forgotten? Did you believe that your every word and look was not to be accounted for, and was not well remembered? Do you believe that I have waited your time, or you mine? What kind of man is he who entered, with all his sickening cant of honesty and truth, into a bond with me to prevent a

marriage he affected to dislike, and when I had redeemed my part to the spirit and the letter, skulked from his, and brought the match about in his own time, to rid himself of a burden he had grown tired of, and cast a spurious lustre on his house?"

"I have acted," cried Mr. Haredale, "with honour and in good faith. I do so now. Do not force me to renew this duel to-night."

"You said my 'wretched' son, I think?" said Sir John with a smile. "Poor fool! The dupe of such a shallow knave—trapped into marriage by such an uncle and by such a niece—he well deserves your pity. But he is no longer a son of mine: you are welcome to the prize your craft has made, sir."

"Once more," cried his opponent, wildly stamping on the ground, "although you tear me from my better angel, I implore you not to come within the reach of my sword to-night. Oh! why were you here at all? Why have we met? To-morrow would have cast us far apart for ever!"

"That being the case," returned Sir John without the least emotion, "it is very fortunate we have met to-night. Haredale, I have always despised you, as you know, but I have given you credit for a species of brute courage. For the honour of my judgment, which I had thought a good one, I am sorry to find you a coward."

Not another word was spoken on either side. They crossed swords, though it was now quite dusk, and attacked each other fiercely. They were well matched, and each was thoroughly skilled in the management of his weapon.

After a few seconds they grew hotter and more furious, and, pressing on each other, inflicted and received several slight wounds. It was directly after receiving one of these in his arm that Mr. Haredale, making a keener thrust as he felt the warm blood spurting out, plunged his sword through his opponent's body to the hilt.

Their eyes met, and were on each other as he drew it out. He put his arm about the dying man, who repulsed him feebly, and dropped upon the turf. Raising himself upon his hands, he gazed at him for an instant, with scorn and hatred in his look; but, seeming to remember, even then, that this expression would distort his features after death, he tried to smile, and, faintly moving his right hand, as if to hide his bloody linen in his vest, fell back dead—the phantom of last night.





“RAISING HIMSELF UPON HIS HANDS, HE GAZED AT HIM FOR AN INSTANT, WITH SCORN AND HATRED IN HIS LOOK.”—P. 318.





## CHAPTER THE LAST.

**A**PARTING glance at such of the actors in this little history as it has not, in the course of its events, dismissed, will bring it to an end.

Mr. Haredale fled that night. Before pursuit could be begun,—indeed, before Sir John was traced or missed,—he had left the kingdom. Repairing straight to a religious establishment, known throughout Europe for the rigour and severity of its discipline, and for the merciless penitence it exacted from those who sought its shelter as a refuge from the world, he took the vows which thenceforth shut him out from nature and his kind, and after a few remorseful years was buried in its gloomy cloisters.

Two days elapsed before the body of Sir John was found. As soon as it was recognised and carried home, the faithful valet, true to his master's creed, eloped with all the cash and movables he could lay his hands on, and started as a finished gentleman upon his own account. In this career he met with great success, and would certainly have married an heiress in the end, but for an unlucky check which led to his premature decease. He sank under a contagious disorder, very prevalent at that time, and vulgarly termed the gaol fever.

Lord George Gordon, remaining in his prison in the Tower until Monday, the fifth of February in the following year, was on that day solemnly tried at Westminster for High Treason. Of this crime he was, after a patient investigation, declared Not Guilty; upon the ground that there was no proof of his having called the multitude together with any traitorous or unlawful intentions. Yet so many people were there still to whom those riots taught no lesson of reproof or moderation, that a public subscription was set on foot in Scotland to defray the cost of his defence.

For seven years afterwards he remained, at the strong intercession of his friends, comparatively quiet; saving that he, every now and then, took occasion to display his zeal for the Protestant faith in some extravagant proceeding which was the delight of its enemies; and saving, besides, that he was formally excommunicated by the Archbishop of Canterbury, for refusing to appear as a witness in the Ecclesiastical Court when cited for that purpose. In the year 1788 he was stimulated by some new insanity to write and publish an injurious pamphlet, reflecting on the Queen of France in very violent terms.

Being indicted for the libel, and (after various strange demonstrations in court) found guilty, he fled into Holland in place of appearing to receive sentence: from whence, as the quiet burgomasters of Amsterdam had no relish for his company, he was sent home again with all speed. Arriving in the month of July at Harwich, and going thence to Birmingham, he made, in the latter place, in August, a public profession of the Jewish religion; and figured there as a Jew until he was arrested, and brought back to London to receive the sentence he had evaded. By virtue of this sentence he was, in the month of December, cast into Newgate for five years and ten months, and required, besides to pay a large fine, and to furnish heavy securities for his future good behaviour.

After addressing, in the midsummer of the following year, an appeal to the commiseration of the National Assembly of France, which the English minister refused to sanction, he composed himself to undergo his full term of punishment; and suffering his beard to grow nearly to his waist, and conforming in all respects to the ceremonies of his new religion, he applied himself to the study of history, and occasionally to the art of painting, in which, in his younger days, he had shown some skill. Deserted by his former friends, and treated in all respects like the worst criminal in the gaol, he lingered on, quite cheerful and resigned, until the first of November, 1793, when he died in his cell, being then only three-and-forty years of age.

Many men with fewer sympathies for the distressed and needy, with less abilities and harder hearts, have made a shining figure and left a brilliant fame. He had his mourners. The prisoners bemoaned his loss, and missed him; for though his means were not large, his charity was great, and in bestowing alms among them he considered the necessities of all alike, and knew no distinction of sect or creed. There are wise men in the highways of the world who may learn something, even from this poor crazy lord who died in Newgate.

To the last he was truly served by bluff John Grueby. John was at his side before he had been four-and-twenty hours in the Tower, and never left him until he died. He had one other constant attendant, in the person of a beautiful Jewish girl; who attached herself to him from feelings half religious, half romantic, but whose virtuous and disinterested character appears to have been beyond the censure even of the most censorious.

Gashford deserted him, of course. He subsisted for a time upon his traffic in his master's

secrets; and, this trade failing when the stock was quite exhausted, procured an appointment in the honourable corps of spies and eavesdroppers employed by the government. As one of these wretched underlings, he did his drudgery, sometimes abroad, sometimes at home, and long endured the various miseries of such a station. Ten or a dozen years ago—not more—a meagre, wan old man, diseased and miserably poor, was found dead in his bed at an obscure inn in the Borough, where he was quite unknown. He had taken poison. There was no clue to his name; but it was discovered, from certain entries in a pocket-book he carried, that he had been secretary to Lord George Gordon in the time of the famous riots.

Many months after the re-establishment of peace and order, and even when it had ceased to be the town talk that every military officer, kept at free quarters by the City during the late alarms, had cost for his board and lodging four pounds four per day, and every private soldier two and twopence halfpenny; many months after even this engrossing topic was forgotten, and the United Bulldogs were to a man all killed, imprisoned, or transported, Mr. Simon Tappertit, being removed from a hospital to prison, and thence to his place of trial, was discharged by proclamation, on two wooden legs. Shorn of his graceful limbs, and brought down from his high estate to circumstances of utter destitution and the deepest misery, he made shift to stump back to his old master, and beg for some relief. By the locksmith's advice and aid, he was established in business as a shoe-black, and opened shop under an archway near the Horse Guards. This being a central quarter, he quickly made a very large connection; and on levee days was sometimes known to have as many as twenty half-pay officers waiting their turn for polishing. Indeed, his trade increased to that extent, that in course of time he entertained no less than two apprentices, besides taking for his wife the widow of an eminent bone and rag collector, formerly of Millbank. With this lady (who assisted in the business) he lived in great domestic happiness, only chequered by those little storms which serve to clear the atmosphere of wedlock, and brighten its horizon. In some of these gusts of bad weather, Mr. Tappertit would, in the assertion of his prerogative, so far forget himself as to correct his lady with a brush, or boot, or shoe; while she (but only in extreme cases) would retaliate by taking off his legs, and leaving him exposed to the derision of those urchins who delight in mischief.

Miss Miggs, baffled in all her schemes, matri-

monial and otherwise, and cast upon a thankless, undeserving world, turned very sharp and sour; and did at length become so acid, and did so pinch and slap and tweak the hair and noses of the youth of Golden Lion Court, that she was by one consent expelled that sanctuary, and desired to bless some other spot of earth in preference. It chanced, at that moment, that the justices of the peace for Middlesex proclaimed by public placard that they stood in need of a female turnkey for the County Bridewell, and appointed a day and hour for the inspection of candidates. Miss Miggs, attending at the time appointed, was instantly chosen and selected from one hundred and twenty-four competitors, and at once promoted to the office; which she held until her decease, more than thirty years afterwards, remaining single all that time. It was observed of this lady that while she was inflexible and grim to all her female flock, she was particularly so to those who could establish any claim to beauty: and it was often remarked, as a proof of her indomitable virtue and severe chastity, that to such as had been frail she showed no mercy; always falling upon them on the slightest occasion, or on no occasion at all, with the fullest measure of her wrath. Among other useful inventions which she practised upon this class of offenders, and bequeathed to posterity, was the art of inflicting an exquisitely vicious poke or dig with the wards of a key in the small of the back, near the spine. She likewise originated a mode of treading by accident (in pattens) on such as had small feet; also very remarkable for its ingenuity, and previously quite unknown.

It was not very long, you may be sure, before Joe Willet and Dolly Varden were made husband and wife, and with a handsome sum in bank (for the locksmith could afford to give his daughter a good dowry), reopened the Maypole. It was not very long, you may be sure, before a red-faced little boy was seen staggering about the Maypole passage, and kicking up his heels on the green before the door. It was not very long, counting by years, before there was a red-faced little girl, another red-faced little boy, and a whole troop of girls and boys: so that, go to Chigwell when you would, there would surely be seen, either in the village street, or on the green, or frolicking in the farmyard—for it was a farm now, as well as a tavern—more small Joes and small Dollys than could be easily counted. It was not a very long time before these appearances ensued; but it *was* a very long time before Joe looked five years older, or Dolly either, or the locksmith either, or his wife either:



for cheerfulness and content are great beautifiers, and are famous preservers of youthful looks, depend upon it.

It was a long time, too, before there was such a country inn as the Maypole in all England: indeed, it is a great question whether there has ever been such another to this hour, or ever will be. It was a long time, too—for Never, as the proverb says, is a long day—before they forgot to have an interest in wounded soldiers at the Maypole; or before Joe omitted to refresh them, for the sake of his old campaign; or before the sergeant left off looking in there now and then; or before they fatigued themselves, or each other, by talking on these occasions of battles and sieges, and hard weather and hard service, and a thousand things belonging to a soldier's life. As to the great silver snuff-box which the King sent Joe with his own hand, because of his conduct in the riots, what guest ever went to the Maypole without putting finger and thumb into that box; and taking a great pinch, though he had never taken a pinch of snuff before, and almost sneezed himself into convulsions even then? As to the purple-faced vintner, where is the man who lived in those times, and never saw *him* at the Maypole: to all appearance as much at home in the best room as if he lived there? And as to the feastings and christenings and revellings at Christmas, and celebrations of birthdays, wedding-days, and all manner of days, both at the Maypole and Golden Key,—if they are not notorious, what facts are?

Mr. Willet the elder, having been by some extraordinary means possessed with the idea that Joe wanted to be married, and that it would be well for him, his father, to retire into private life, and enable him to live in comfort, took up his abode in a small cottage at Chigwell; where they widened and enlarged the fireplace for him, hung up the boiler, and furthermore planted, in the little garden outside the front-door, a fictitious Maypole: so that he was quite at home directly. To this his new habitation, Tom Cobb, Phil Parkes, and Solomon Daisy went regularly every night: and in the chimney-corner they all four quaffed, and smoked, and prosed, and dozed, as they had done of old. It being accidentally discovered, after a short time, that Mr. Willet still appeared to consider himself a landlord by profession, Joe provided him with a slate, upon which the old man regularly scored up vast accounts for meat, drink, and tobacco. As he grew older this passion increased upon him; and it became his delight to chalk against the name of each of his cronies a sum of enormous

magnitude, and impossible to be paid: and such was his secret joy in these entries, that he would be perpetually seen going behind the door to look at them, and coming forth again, suffused with the liveliest satisfaction.

He never recovered the surprise the rioters had given him, and remained in the same mental condition down to the last moment of his life. It was like to have been brought to a speedy termination by the first sight of his first grandchild, which appeared to fill him with the belief that some alarming miracle had happened to Joe. Being promptly blooded, however, by a skilful surgeon, he rallied; and although the doctors all agreed, on his being attacked with symptoms of apoplexy six months afterwards, that he ought to die, and took it very ill that he did not, he remained alive—possibly on account of his constitutional slowness—for nearly seven years more, when he was one morning found speechless in his bed. He lay in this state, free from all tokens of uneasiness, for a whole week, when he was suddenly restored to consciousness by hearing the nurse whisper in his son's ear that he was going. "I'm a-going, Joseph," said Mr. Willet, turning round upon the instant, "to the Salvanners"—and immediately gave up the ghost.

He left a large sum of money behind him; even more than he was supposed to have been worth, although the neighbours, according to the custom of mankind in calculating the wealth that other people ought to have saved, had estimated his property in good round numbers. Joe inherited the whole; so that he became a man of great consequence in those parts, and was perfectly independent.

Some time elapsed before Barnaby got the better of the shock he had sustained, or regained his old health and gaiety. But he recovered by degrees: and although he could never separate his condemnation and escape from the idea of a terrific dream, he became, in other respects, more rational. Dating from the time of his recovery, he had a better memory and greater steadiness of purpose; but a dark cloud overhung his whole previous existence, and never cleared away.

He was not the less happy for this; for his love of freedom and interest in all that moved or grew, or had its being in the elements, remained to him unimpaired. He lived with his mother on the Maypole farm, tending the poultry and the cattle, working in a garden of his own, and helping everywhere. He was known to every bird and beast about the place, and had a name for every one. Never was there a

lighter-hearted husbandman, a creature more popular with young and old, a blither or more happy soul than Barnaby; and though he was free to ramble where he would, he never quitted Her, but was for evermore her stay and comfort.

It was remarkable that, although he had that dim sense of the past, he sought out Hugh's dog, and took him under his care; and that he never could be tempted into London. When the riots were many years old, and Edward and his wife came back to England with a family almost as numerous as Dolly's, and one day appeared at the Maypole porch, he knew them instantly, and wept and leaped for joy. But neither to visit them, nor on any other pretence, no matter how full of promise and enjoyment, could he be persuaded to set foot in the streets: nor did he ever conquer his repugnance, or look upon the town again.

Grip soon recovered his looks, and became as glossy and sleek as ever. But he was profoundly silent. Whether he had forgotten the art of Polite Conversation in Newgate, or had

made a vow in those troubled times to forego, for a period, the display of his accomplishments, is matter of uncertainty; but certain it is that for a whole year he never indulged in any other sound than a grave, decorous croak. At the expiration of that term, the morning being very bright and sunny, he was heard to address himself to the horses in the stable upon the subject of the Kettle, so often mentioned in these pages; and before the witness who overheard him could run into the house with the intelligence, and add to it, upon his solemn affirmation, the statement that he had heard him laugh, the bird himself advanced with fantastic steps to the very door of the bar, and there cried, "I'm a devil, I'm a devil, I'm a devil!" with extraordinary rapture.

From that period (although he was supposed to be much affected by the death of Mr. Willet senior), he constantly practised and improved himself in the vulgar tongue; and, as he was a mere infant for a raven when Barnaby was grey, he has very probably gone on talking to the present time.







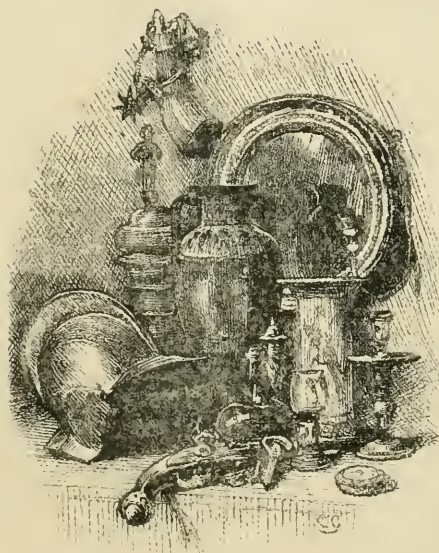


"THE DOOR BEING OPENED, THE CHILD ADDRESSED HIM AS HER GRANDFATHER." — P. 3



THE  
OLD CURIOSITY SHOP

BY  
CHARLES DICKENS



*WITH THIRTY-NINE ILLUSTRATIONS BY C. GREEN .*

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LONDON: CHAPMAN AND HALL, 193 PICCADILLY .





## PREFACE.

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IN April, 1840, I issued the first number of a new weekly publication, price threepence, called MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK. It was intended to consist, for the most part, of detached papers, but was to include one continuous story, to be resumed from time to time, with such indefinite intervals between each period of resumption as might best accord with the exigencies and capabilities of the proposed Miscellany.

The first chapter of this tale appeared in the fourth number of MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK, when I had already been made uneasy by the desultory character of that work, and when, I believe, my readers had thoroughly participated in the feeling. The commencement of a story was a great satisfaction to me, and I had reason to believe that my readers participated in this feeling too. Hence, being pledged to some interruptions and some pursuit of the original design, I set cheerfully about disentangling myself from those impediments as fast as I could; and, that done, from that time until its completion THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP was written and published from week to week in weekly parts.

When the story was finished, that it might be freed from the encumbrance of associations and interruptions with which it had no kind of concern, I caused the few sheets of MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK which had been printed in connection with it to be cancelled; and, like the unfinished tale of the windy night and the notary in *The Sentimental Journey*, they became the property of the trunk-maker and the butterman. I was especially unwilling, I confess, to enrich those respectable trades with the opening paper of the abandoned design, in which MASTER HUMPHREY described himself and his manner of life. Though I now affect to make the confession philosophically, as referring to a bygone emotion, I am conscious that my pen winces a little even while I write these words. But it was done, and wisely done, and MASTER HUMPHREY'S CLOCK, as originally constructed, became one of the lost books of the earth—which, we all know, are far more precious than any that can be read for love or money.

In reference to the tale itself, I desire to say very little here. The many friends it won me, and the many hearts it turned to me when they were full of private sorrow, invest it with an interest, in my mind, which is not a public one, and the rightful place of which appears to be "a more removed ground."

I will merely observe, therefore, that, in writing the book, I had it always in my fancy to surround the lonely figure of the child with grotesque and wild, but not impossible, companions, and to gather about her innocent face and pure intentions associates as strange and uncongenial as the grim objects that are about her bed when her history is first foreshadowed.

MASTER HUMPHREY (before his devotion to the trunk and butter business) was originally supposed to be the narrator of the story. As it was constructed from the beginning, however, with

a view to separate publication when completed, his demise has not involved the necessity of any alteration.

I have a mournful pride in one recollection associated with "little Nell." While she was yet upon her wanderings, not then concluded, there appeared in a literary journal, an essay of which she was the principal theme, so earnestly, so eloquently, and tenderly appreciative of her, and of all her shadowy kith and kin, that it would have been insensibility in me if I could have read it without an unusual glow of pleasure and encouragement. Long afterwards, and when I had come to know him well, and to see him, stout of heart, going slowly down into his grave, I knew the writer of that essay to be THOMAS HOOD.



# ILLUSTRATIONS.

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## THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP.

### CHAPTER I.

**N**IGHT is generally my time for walking, although I am an old man. In the summer I often leave home early in the morning, and roam about fields and lanes all day, or even escape for days or weeks together; but, saving in the country, I seldom go out until after dark, though, Heaven be thanked, I love its light, and feel the cheerfulness it sheds upon the earth, as much as any creature living.

I have fallen insensibly into this habit, both because it favours my infirmity, and because it affords me greater opportunity of speculating on the characters and occupations of those who fill the streets. The glare and hurry of broad noon

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP, I.

are not adapted to idle pursuits like mine; a glimpse of passing faces caught by the light of a street lamp, or a shop-window, is often better for my purpose than their full revelation in the daylight; and, if I must add the truth, night is kinder in this respect than day, which too often destroys an air-built castle at the moment of its completion, without the least ceremony or remorse.

That constant pacing to and fro, that never-ending restlessness, that incessant tread of feet wearing the rough stones smooth and glossy—is it not a wonder how the dwellers in narrow ways can bear to hear it? Think of a sick man, in such a place as St. Martin's Court, listening to the footsteps, and, in the midst of pain and weariness, obliged, despite himself (as though it were a task he must perform) to detect the

child's step from the man's, the slipshod beggar from the booted exquisite, the lounging from the busy, the dull heel of the sauntering outcast from the quick tread of an expectant pleasure-seeker—think of the hum and noise being always present to his senses, and of the stream of life that will not stop, pouring on, on, on, through all his restless dreams, as if he were condemned to lie, dead but conscious, in a noisy churchyard, and had no hope of rest for centuries to come!

Then, the crowds for ever passing and repassing on the bridges (on those which are free of toll at least), where many stop on fine evenings looking listlessly down upon the water, with some vague idea that by-and-by it runs between green banks which grow wider and wider until at last it joins the broad vast sea—where some halt to rest from heavy loads, and think, as they look over the parapet, that to smoke and lounge away one's life, and lie sleeping in the sun upon a hot tarpaulin, in a dull, slow, sluggish barge, must be happiness unalloyed—and where some, and a very different class, pause with heavier loads than they, remembering to have heard or read in some old time that drowning was not a hard death, but of all means of suicide the easiest and best.

Covent-Garden Market at sunrise too, in the spring or summer, when the fragrance of sweet flowers is in the air, overpowering even the unwholesome steams of last night's debauchery, and driving the dusky thrush, whose cage has hung outside a garret window all night long, half mad with joy! Poor bird! the only neighbouring thing at all akin to the other little captives, some of whom, shrinking from the hot hands of drunken purchasers, lie drooping on the path already, while others, soddened by close contact, await the time when they shall be watered and freshened up to please more sober company, and make old clerks who pass them on their road to business wonder what has filled their breasts with visions of the country.

But my present purpose is not to expatiate upon my walks. The story I am about to relate arose out of one of these rambles; and thus I have been led to speak of them by way of preface.

One night I had roamed into the City, and was walking slowly on in my usual way, musing upon a great many things, when I was arrested by an inquiry the purport of which did not reach me, but which seemed to be addressed to myself, and was preferred in a soft sweet voice that struck me very pleasantly. I turned hastily round, and found at my elbow a pretty little

girl, who begged to be directed to a certain street at a considerable distance, and indeed in quite another quarter of the town.

"It is a very long way from here," said I, "my child."

"I know that, sir," she replied timidly. "I am afraid it is a very long way; for I came from there to-night."

"Alone?" said I, in some surprise.

"Oh yes, I don't mind that, but I am a little frightened now, for I have lost my road."

"And what made you ask it of me? Suppose I should tell you wrong?"

"I am sure you will not do that," said the little creature, "you are such a very old gentleman, and walk so slow yourself."

I cannot describe how much I was impressed by this appeal, and the energy with which it was made, which brought a tear into the child's clear eye, and made her slight figure tremble as she looked up into my face.

"Come," said I, "I'll take you there."

She put her hand in mine, as confidently as if she had known me from her cradle, and we trudged away together: the little creature accommodating her pace to mine, and rather seeming to lead and take care of me than I to be protecting her. I observed that every now and then she stole a curious look at my face, as if to make quite sure that I was not deceiving her, and that these glances (very sharp and keen they were too) seemed to increase her confidence at every repetition.

For my part, my curiosity and interest were, at least, equal to the child's; for child she certainly was, although I thought it probable, from what I could make out, that her very small and delicate frame imparted a peculiar youthfulness to her appearance. Though more scantily attired than she might have been, she was dressed with perfect neatness, and betrayed no marks of poverty or neglect.

"Who has sent you so far by yourself?" said I.

"Somebody who is very kind to me, sir."

"And what have you been doing?"

"That I must not tell," said the child.

There was something in the manner of this reply which caused me to look at the little creature with an involuntary expression of surprise; for I wondered what kind of errand it might be that occasioned her to be prepared for questioning. Her quick eye seemed to read my thoughts. As it met mine, she added that there was no harm in what she had been doing, but it was a great secret—a secret which she did not even know herself.

This was said with no appearance of cunning



or deceit, but with an unsuspecting frankness that bore the impress of truth. She walked on, as before: growing more familiar with me as we proceeded, and talking cheerfully by the way, but she said no more about her home, beyond remarking that we were going quite a new road, and asking if it were a short one.

While we were thus engaged, I revolved in my mind a hundred different explanations of the riddle, and rejected them every one. I really felt ashamed to take advantage of the ingenuousness or grateful feeling of the child, for the purpose of gratifying my curiosity. I love these little people; and it is not a slight thing when they, who are so fresh from God, love us. As I had felt pleased, at first, by her confidence, I determined to deserve it, and to do credit to the nature which had prompted her to repose it in me.

There was no reason, however, why I should refrain from seeing the person who had inconsiderately sent her to so great a distance by night and alone; and, as it was not improbable that if she found herself near home she might take farewell of me and deprive me of the opportunity, I avoided the most frequented ways and took the most intricate. Thus it was not until we arrived in the street itself that she knew where we were. Clapping her hands with pleasure, and running on before me for a short distance, my little acquaintance stopped at a door, and remaining on the step till I came up, knocked at it when I joined her.

A part of this door was of glass, unprotected by any shutter; which I did not observe at first, for all was very dark and silent within, and I was anxious (as indeed the child was also) for an answer to our summons. When she had knocked twice or thrice, there was a noise as if some person were moving inside, and at length a faint light appeared through the glass, which, as it approached very slowly—the bearer having to make his way through a great many scattered articles—enabled me to see, both what kind of person it was who advanced, and what kind of place it was through which he came.

He was a little old man with long grey hair, whose face and figure, as he held the light above his head and looked before him as he approached, I could plainly see. Though much altered by age, I fancied I could recognise in his spare and slender form something of that delicate mould which I had noticed in the child. Their bright blue eyes were certainly alike, but his face was so deeply furrowed, and so very full of care, that here all resemblance ceased.

The place through which he made his way at leisure was one of those receptacles for old and

curious things which seem to crouch in odd corners of this town, and to hide their musty treasures from the public eye in jealousy and distrust. There were suits of mail, standing like ghosts in armour, here and there; fantastic carvings brought from monkish cloisters; rusty weapons of various kinds; distorted figures in china, and wood, and iron, and ivory; tapestry and strange furniture that might have been designed in dreams. The haggard aspect of the little old man was wonderfully suited to the place; he might have groped among old churches, and tombs, and deserted houses, and gathered all the spoils with his own hands. There was nothing in the whole collection but was in keeping with himself; nothing that looked older or more worn than he.

As he turned the key in the lock, he surveyed me with some astonishment, which was not diminished when he looked from me to my companion. The door being opened, the child addressed him as her grandfather, and told him the little story of our companionship.

"Why, bless thee, child," said the old man, patting her on the head, "how couldst thou miss thy way? What if I had lost thee, Nell?"

"I would have found my way back to *you*, grandfather," said the child boldly; "never fear."

The old man kissed her; then turned to me and begged me to walk in. I did so. The door was closed and locked. Preceding me with the light, he led me through the place I had already seen from without, into a small sitting-room behind, in which was another door opening into a kind of closet, where I saw a little bed that a fairy might have slept in: it looked so very small and was so prettily arranged. The child took a candle and tripped into this little room, leaving the old man and me together.

"You must be tired, sir," said he as he placed a chair near the fire. "How can I thank you?"

"By taking more care of your grandchild another time, my good friend," I replied.

"More care!" said the old man in a shrill voice, "more care of Nelly! Why, who ever loved a child as I love Nell?"

He said this with such evident surprise, that I was perplexed what answer to make; the more so, because, coupled with something feeble and wandering in his manner, there were, in his face, marks of deep and anxious thought, which convinced me that he could not be, as I had been at first inclined to suppose, in a state of dotage or imbecility.

"I don't think you consider——" I began.

"I don't consider!" cried the old man, inter-

rupting me, "I don't consider her! Ah, how little you know of the truth! Little Nelly, little Nelly!"

It would be impossible for any man—I care not what his form of speech might be—to express more affection than the dealer in curiosities did, in these four words. I waited for him to speak again, but he rested his chin upon his hand, and shaking his head twice or thrice, fixed his eyes upon the fire.

While we were sitting thus, in silence, the door of the closet opened, and the child returned: her light brown hair hanging loose about her neck, and her face flushed with the haste she had made to rejoin us. She busied herself, immediately, in preparing supper. While she was thus engaged I remarked that the old man took an opportunity of observing me more closely than he had done yet. I was surprised to see that, all this time, everything was done by the child, and that there appeared to be no other persons but ourselves in the house. I took advantage of a moment when she was absent to venture a hint on this point, to which the old man replied that there were few grown persons as trustworthy or as careful as she.

"It always grieves me," I observed, roused by what I took to be his selfishness: "it always grieves me to contemplate the initiation of children into the ways of life, when they are scarcely more than infants. It checks their confidence and simplicity—two of the best qualities that Heaven gives them—and demands that they share our sorrows before they are capable of entering into our enjoyments."

"It will never check hers," said the old man, looking steadily at me, "the springs are too deep. Besides, the children of the poor know but few pleasures. Even the cheap delights of childhood must be bought and paid for."

"But—forgive me for saying this—you are surely not so very poor," said I.

"She is not my child, sir," returned the old man. "Her mother was, and she was poor. I save nothing—not a penny—though I live as you see, but"—he laid his hand upon my arm and leant forward to whisper—"she shall be rich one of these days, and a fine lady. Don't you think ill of me, because I use her help. She gives it cheerfully as you see, and it would break her heart if she knew that I suffered anybody else to do for me what her little hands could undertake. I don't consider!" he cried with sudden querulousness. "Why, God knows that this one child is the thought and object of my life, and yet he never prospers me—no, never!"

At this juncture, the subject of our conversa-

tion again returned, and the old man, motioning to me to approach the table, broke off, and said no more.

We had scarcely begun our repast when there was a knock at the door by which I had entered; and Nell: bursting into a hearty laugh, which I was rejoiced to hear, for it was childlike and full of hilarity: said it was no doubt dear old Kit come back at last.

"Foolish Nell!" said the old man, fondling with her hair. "She always laughs at poor Kit."

The child laughed again more heartily than before, and I could not help smiling from pure sympathy. The little old man took up a candle and went to open the door. When he came back, Kit was at his heels.

Kit was a shock-headed, shambling, awkward lad, with an uncommonly wide mouth, very red cheeks, a turned-up nose, and certainly the most comical expression of face I ever saw. He stopped short at the door on seeing a stranger, twirled in his hand a perfectly round old hat without any vestige of a brim, and, resting himself now on one leg, and now on the other, and changing them constantly, stood in the doorway, looking into the parlour with the most extraordinary leer I ever beheld. I entertained a grateful feeling towards the boy from that minute, for I felt that he was the comedy of the child's life.

"A long way, wasn't it, Kit?" said the little old man.

"Why, then, it was a goodish stretch, master," returned Kit.

"Did you find the house easily?"

"Why, then, not over and above easy, master," said Kit.

"Of course you have come back hungry?"

"Why, then, I do consider myself rather so, master," was the answer.

The lad had a remarkable manner of standing sideways as he spoke, and thrusting his head forward over his shoulder, as if he could not get at his voice without that accompanying action. I think he would have amused one anywhere, but the child's exquisite enjoyment of his oddity, and the relief it was to find that there was something she associated with merriment, in a place that appeared so unsuited to her, were quite irresistible. It was a great point, too, that Kit himself was flattered by the sensation he created, and after several efforts to preserve his gravity, burst into a loud roar, and so stood with his mouth wide open and his eyes nearly shut, laughing violently.

The old man had again relapsed into his former abstraction, and took no notice of what



passed; but I remarked that when her laugh was over, the child's bright eyes were dimmed with tears, called forth by the fulness of heart with which she welcomed her uncouth favourite after the little anxiety of the night. As for Kit himself (whose laugh had been all the time one of that sort which very little would change into a cry) he carried a large slice of bread and meat, and a mug of beer, into a corner, and applied himself to disposing of them with great voracity.

"Ah!" said the old man, turning to me with a sigh as if I had spoken to him but that moment, "you don't know what you say, when you tell me that I don't consider her."

"You must not attach too great weight to a remark founded on first appearances, my friend," said I.

"No," returned the old man thoughtfully, "no. Come hither, Nell."

The little girl hastened from her seat, and put her arm about his neck.

"Do I love thee, Nell?" said he. "Say—do I love thee, Nell, or no?"

The child only answered by her caresses, and laid her head upon his breast.

"Why dost thou sob?" said the grandfather, pressing her closer to him and glancing towards me. "Is it because thou know'st I love thee, and dost not like that I should seem to doubt it by my question? Well, well—then let us say I love thee dearly."

"Indeed, indeed you do," replied the child with great earnestness; "Kit knows you do."

Kit, who in dispatching his bread and meat had been swallowing two-thirds of his knife at every mouthful with the coolness of a juggler, stopped short in his operations on being thus appealed to, and bawled, "Nobody isn't such a fool as to say he doosn't," after which he incapacitated himself for further conversation by taking a most prodigious sandwich at one bite.

"She is poor now," said the old man, patting the child's cheek, "but I say again, the time is coming when she shall be rich. It has been a long time coming, but it must come at last; a very long time, but it surely must come. It has come to other men who do nothing but waste and riot. When *will* it come to me?"

"I am very happy as I am, grandfather," said the child.

"Tush, tush!" returned the old man, "thou dost not know—how shouldst thou?" Then he muttered again between his teeth, "The time must come, I am very sure it must. It will be all the better for coming late;" and then he sighed and fell into his former musing

state, and still holding the child between his knees, appeared to be insensible to everything around him. By this time it wanted but a few minutes of midnight, and I rose to go: which recalled him to himself.

"One moment, sir," he said. "Now, Kit—near midnight, boy, and you still here! Get home, get home, and be true to your time in the morning, for there's work to do. Good night! There, bid him good night, Nell, and let him be gone!"

"Good night, Kit," said the child, her eyes lighting up with merriment and kindness.

"Good night, Miss Nell," returned the boy.

"And thank this gentleman," interposed the old man, "but for whose care I might have lost my little girl to-night."

"No, no, master," said Kit, "that won't do, that won't."

"What do you mean?" cried the old man.

"I'd have found her, master," said Kit, "I'd have found her! I'd bet that I'd find her if she was above-ground. I would, as quick as anybody, master! Ha, ha, ha!"

Once more opening his mouth and shutting his eyes, and laughing like a Stentor, Kit gradually backed to the door, and roared himself out.

Free of the room, the boy was not slow in taking his departure. When he had gone, and the child was occupied in clearing the table, the old man said:

"I haven't seemed to thank you, sir, enough for what you have done to-night, but I do thank you, humbly and heartily; and so does she; and her thanks are better worth than mine. I should be sorry that you went away and thought I was unmindful of your goodness, or careless of her—I am not indeed."

I was sure of that, I said, from what I had seen. "But," I added, "may I ask you a question?"

"Ay, sir," replied the old man; "what is it?"

"This delicate child," said I, "with so much beauty and intelligence—has she nobody to care for her but you? Has she no other companion or adviser?"

"No," he returned, looking anxiously in my face, "no, and she wants no other."

"But are you not fearful," said I, "that you may misunderstand a charge so tender? I am sure you mean well, but are you quite certain that you know how to execute such a trust as this? I am an old man, like you, and I am actuated by an old man's concern in all that is young and promising. Do you not think that what I have seen of you and this little creature

to-night, must have an interest not wholly free from pain?"

"Sir," rejoined the old man after a moment's silence, "I have no right to feel hurt at what you say. It is true that in many respects I am the child, and she the grown person—that you have seen already. But, waking or sleeping, by night or day, in sickness or health, she is the one object of my care; and if you knew of how much care, you would look on me with different eyes, you would indeed. Ah! it's a weary life for an old man—a weary, weary life—but there is a great end to gain, and that I keep before me."

Seeing that he was in a state of excitement and impatience, I turned to put on an outer coat which I had thrown off on entering the room: purposing to say no more. I was surprised to see the child standing patiently by, with a cloak upon her arm, and in her hand a hat and stick.

"Those are not mine, my dear," said I.

"No," returned the child quietly, "they are grandfather's."

"But he is not going out to-night."

"Oh yes, he is!" said the child with a smile.

"And what becomes of you, my pretty one?"

"Me! I stay here, of course. I always do."

I looked in astonishment towards the old man; but he was, or feigned to be, busied in the arrangement of his dress. From him, I looked back to the slight gentle figure of the child. Alone! In that gloomy place all the long dreary night!

She evinced no consciousness of my surprise, but cheerfully helped the old man with his cloak, and, when he was ready, took a candle to light us out. Finding that we did not follow as she expected, she looked back with a smile and waited for us. The old man showed by his face that he plainly understood the cause of my hesitation, but he merely signed to me with an inclination of the head to pass out of the room before him, and remained silent. I had no resource but to comply.

When we reached the door, the child, setting down the candle, turned to say good night, and raised her face to kiss me. Then, she ran to the old man, who folded her in his arms and bade God bless her.

"Sleep soundly, Nell," he said in a low voice, "and angels guard thy bed! Do not forget thy prayers, my sweet."

"No, indeed," answered the child fervently, "they make me feel so happy!"

"That's well; I know they do; they should,"

said the old man. "Bless thee a hundred times! Early in the morning I shall be home."

"You'll not ring twice," returned the child. "The bell wakes me even in the middle of a dream."

With this, they separated. The child opened the door (now guarded by a shutter, which I had heard the boy put up before he left the house), and with another farewell, whose clear and tender note I have recalled a thousand times, held it until we had passed out. The old man paused a moment while it was gently closed and fastened on the inside, and, satisfied that this was done, walked on at a slow pace. At the street corner he stopped. Regarding me with a troubled countenance, he said that our ways were widely different, and that he must take his leave. I would have spoken, but summoning up more alacrity than might have been expected in one of his appearance, he hurried away. I could see that, twice or thrice, he looked back as if to ascertain if I were still watching him, or perhaps to assure himself that I was not following at a distance. The obscurity of the night favoured his disappearance, and his figure was soon beyond my sight.

I remained standing on the spot where he had left me: unwilling to depart, and yet unknowing why I should loiter there. I looked wistfully into the street we had lately quitted, and, after a time, directed my steps that way. I passed and repassed the house, and stopped, and listened at the door; all was dark, and silent as the grave.

Yet I lingered about, and could not tear myself away: thinking of all possible harm that might happen to the child—of fires, and robberies, and even murder—and feeling as if some evil must ensue if I turned my back upon the place. The closing of a door or window in the street brought me before the curiosity-dealer's once more. I crossed the road, and looked up at the house, to assure myself that the noise had not come from there. No, it was black, cold, and lifeless as before.

There were few passengers astir; the street was sad and dismal, and pretty well my own. A few stragglers from the theatres hurried by, and, now and then, I turned aside to avoid some noisy drunkard as he reeled homewards; but these interruptions were not frequent, and soon ceased. The clocks struck one. Still I paced up and down, promising myself that every time should be the last, and breaking faith with myself on some new plea, as often as I did so.

The more I thought of what the old man had said, and of his looks and bearing, the less I



could account for what I had seen and heard. I had a strong misgiving that his nightly absence was for no good purpose. I had only come to know the fact through the innocence of the child; and, though the old man was by at the time and saw my undisguised surprise, he had preserved a strange mystery on the subject, and offered no word of explanation. These reflections naturally recalled again, more strongly than before, his haggard face, his wandering manner, his restless anxious looks. His affection for the child might not be inconsistent with villainy of the worst kind; even that very affection was, in itself, an extraordinary contradiction, or how could he leave her thus? Disposed as I was to think badly of him, I never doubted that his love for her was real. I could not admit the thought, remembering what had passed between us, and the tone of voice in which he had called her by her name.

"Stay here, of course," the child had said in answer to my question; "I always do!" What could take him from home by night, and every night? I called up all the strange tales I had ever heard, of dark and secret deeds committed in great towns and escaping detection for a long series of years. Wild as many of these stories were, I could not find one adapted to this mystery, which only became the more impenetrable, in proportion as I sought to solve it.

Occupied with such thoughts as these, and a crowd of others all tending to the same point, I continued to pace the street for two long hours. At length, the rain began to descend heavily; and then, overpowered by fatigue, though no less interested than I had been at first, I engaged the nearest coach, and so got home. A cheerful fire was blazing on the hearth, the lamp burnt brightly, my clock received me with its old familiar welcome; everything was quiet, warm, and cheering, and in happy contrast to the gloom and darkness I had quitted.

I sat down in my easy-chair, and falling back upon its ample cushions, pictured to myself the child in her bed: alone, unwatched, uncared for (save by angels), yet sleeping peacefully. So very young, so spiritual, so slight and fairy-like a creature passing the long dull nights in such an uncongenial place—I could not dismiss it from my thoughts.

We are so much in the habit of allowing impressions to be made upon us by external objects, which should be produced by reflection alone, but which, without such visible aids, often escape us, that I am not sure I should have been so thoroughly possessed by this one subject, but for the heaps of fantastic things I

had seen huddled together in the curiosity-dealer's warehouse. These, crowding on my mind, in connection with the child, and gathering round her, as it were, brought her condition palpably before me. I had her image, without any effort of imagination, surrounded and beset by everything that was foreign to its nature, and farthest removed from the sympathies of her sex and age. If these helps to my fancy had all been wanting, and I had been forced to imagine her in a common chamber, with nothing unusual or uncouth in its appearance, it is very probable that I should have been less impressed with her strange and solitary state. As it was, she seemed to exist in a kind of allegory; and, having these shapes about her, claimed my interest so strongly, that (as I have already remarked) I could not dismiss her from my recollection, do what I would.

"It would be a curious speculation," said I after some restless turns across and across the room, "to imagine her, in her future life, holding her solitary way among a crowd of wild grotesque companions: the only pure, fresh, youthful object in the throng. It would be curious to find——"

I checked myself here, for the theme was carrying me along with it at a great pace, and I already saw before me a region on which I was little disposed to enter. I agreed with myself that this was idle musing, and resolved to go to bed, and court forgetfulness.

But all that night, waking or in my sleep, the same thoughts recurred, and the same images retained possession of my brain. I had, ever before me, the old dark murky rooms—the gaunt suits of mail with their ghostly silent air—the faces all awry, grinning from wood and stone—the dust, and rust, and worm that lives in wood—and alone in the midst of all this lumber and decay and ugly age, the beautiful child in her gentle slumber, smiling through her light and sunny dreams.

## CHAPTER II.

**A**FTER combating, for nearly a week, the feeling which impelled me to revisit the place I had quitted under the circumstances already detailed, I yielded to it at length; and determining that this time I would present myself by the light of day, bent my steps thither early in the afternoon.

I walked past the house, and took several turns in the street, with that kind of hesitation

which is natural to a man who is conscious that the visit he is about to pay is unexpected, and may not be very acceptable. However, as the door of the shop was shut, and it did not appear likely that I should be recognised by those within, if I continued merely to pass up and down before it, I soon conquered this irresolution, and found myself in the curiosity-dealer's warehouse.

The old man and another person were together in the back part, and there seemed to have been high words between them, for their voices, which were raised to a very loud pitch, suddenly stopped on my entering, and the old man, advancing hastily towards me, said in a tremulous tone that he was very glad I had come.

"You interrupted us at a critical moment," he said, pointing to the man whom I had found in company with him; "this fellow will murder me one of these days. He would have done so, long ago, if he had dared."

"Bah! You would swear away my life if you could," returned the other, after bestowing a stare and a frown on me; "we all know that!"

"I almost think I could," cried the old man, turning feebly upon him. "If oaths, or prayers, or words could rid me of you, they should. I would be quit of you, and would be relieved if you were dead."

"I know it," returned the other. "I said so, didn't I? But neither oaths, nor prayers, nor words *will* kill me, and therefore I live, and mean to live."

"And his mother died!" cried the old man passionately, clasping his hands and looking upward; "and this is Heaven's justice!"

The other stood lounging with his foot upon a chair, and regarded him with a contemptuous sneer. He was a young man of one-and-twenty, or thereabouts; well made, and certainly handsome, though the expression of his face was far from prepossessing, having, in common with his manner and even his dress, a dissipated, insolent air which repelled one.

"Justice or no justice," said the young fellow, "here I am, and here I shall stop till such time as I think fit to go, unless you send for assistance to put me out—which you won't do, I know. I tell you again that I want to see my sister."

"Your sister!" said the old man bitterly.

"Ah! You can't change the relationship," returned the other. "If you could, you'd have done it long ago. I want to see my sister, that you keep cooped up here, poisoning her mind with your sly secrets, and pretending an affection for her that you may work her to death, and add a few scraped shillings every week to the money

you can hardly count. I want to see her; and I will."

"Here's a moralist to talk of poisoned minds! Here's a generous spirit to scorn scraped-up shillings!" cried the old man, turning from him to me. "A profligate, sir, who has forfeited every claim not only upon those who have the misfortune to be of his blood, but upon society, which knows nothing of him but his misdeeds. A liar, too," he added in a lower voice as he drew closer to me, "who knows how dear she is to me, and seeks to wound me even there, because there is a stranger by."

"Strangers are nothing to me, grandfather," said the young fellow, catching at the words, "nor I to them, I hope. The best they can do is to keep an eye to their business, and leave me to mine. There's a friend of mine waiting outside, and as it seems that I may have to wait some time, I'll call him in, with your leave."

Saying this, he stepped to the door, and looking down the street, beckoned several times to some unseen person, who, to judge from the air of impatience with which these signals were accompanied, required a great quantity of persuasion to induce him to advance. At length there sauntered up, on the opposite side of the way—with a bad pretence of passing by accident—a figure conspicuous for its dirty smartness, which after a great many frowns and jerks of the head, in resistance of the invitation, ultimately crossed the road and was brought into the shop.

"There! It's Dick Swiveller," said the young fellow, pushing him in. "Sit down, Swiveller."

"But is the old man agreeable?" said Mr. Swiveller in an under-tone.

"Sit down," repeated his companion.

Mr. Swiveller complied, and looking about him with a propitiatory smile, observed that last week was a fine week for the ducks, and this week was a fine week for the dust; he also observed that while standing by the post at the street corner, he had observed a pig with a straw in his mouth issuing out of the tobacco shop, from which appearance he argued that another fine week for the ducks was approaching, and that rain would certainly ensue. He furthermore took occasion to apologise for any negligence that might be perceptible in his dress, on the ground that last night he had had "the sun very strong in his eyes;" by which expression he was understood to convey to his hearers, in the most delicate manner possible, the information that he had been extremely drunk.

"But what," said Mr. Swiveller with a sigh, "what is the odds so long as the fire of soul is kindled at the taper of conviviality, and the



wing of friendship never moults a feather? What is the odds so long as the spirit is expanded by means of rosy wine, and the present moment is the least happiest of our existence?"

"You needn't act the chairman here," said his friend, half aside.

"Fred!" cried Mr. Swiveller, tapping his nose, "a word to the wise is sufficient for them—we may be good and happy without riches, Fred. Say not another syllable. I know my cue; smart is the word. Only one little whisper, Fred—*is* the old min friendly?"

"Never you mind," replied his friend.

"Right again, quite right," said Mr. Swiveller; "caution is the word, and caution is the act." With that, he winked, as if in preservation of some deep secret, and folding his arms and leaning back in his chair, looked up at the ceiling with profound gravity.

It was perhaps not very unreasonable to suspect, from what had already passed, that Mr. Swiveller was not quite recovered from the effects of the powerful sun-light to which he had made allusion; but if no such suspicion had been awakened by his speech, his wiry hair, dull eyes, and sallow face would still have been strong witnesses against him. His attire was not, as he had himself hinted, remarkable for the nicest arrangement, but was in a state of disorder which strongly induced the idea that he had gone to bed in it. It consisted of a brown body-coat with a great many brass buttons up the front and only one behind, a bright check neckerchief, a plaid waistcoat, soiled white trousers, and a very limp hat, worn with the wrong side foremost, to hide a hole in the brim. The breast of his coat was ornamented with an outside pocket, from which there peeped forth the cleanest end of a very large and very ill-favoured handkerchief; his dirty wristbands were pulled down as far as possible, and ostentatiously folded back over his cuffs; he displayed no gloves, and carried a yellow cane having on the top a bone hand, with the semblance of a ring on its little finger and a black ball in its grasp. With all these personal advantages (to which may be added a strong savour of tobacco smoke, and a prevailing greasiness of appearance) Mr. Swiveller leant back in his chair with his eyes fixed on the ceiling, and occasionally pitching his voice to the needful key, obliged the company with a few bars of an intensely dismal air, and then, in the middle of a note, relapsed into his former silence.

The old man sat himself down in a chair, and, with folded hands, looked sometimes at his grandson and sometimes at his strange com-

panion, as if he were utterly powerless, and had no resource but to leave them to do as they pleased. The young man reclined against a table at no great distance from his friend, in apparent indifference to everything that had passed; and I—who felt the difficulty of any interference, notwithstanding that the old man had appealed to me, both by words and looks—made the best feint I could of being occupied in examining some of the goods that were disposed for sale, and paying very little attention to the persons before me.

The silence was not of long duration, for Mr. Swiveller, after favouring us with several melodious assurances that his heart was in the Highlands, and that he wanted but his Arab steed as a preliminary to the achievement of great feats of valour and loyalty, removed his eyes from the ceiling and subsided into prose again.

"Fred," said Mr. Swiveller, stopping short as if the idea had suddenly occurred to him, and speaking in the same audible whisper as before, "*is* the old min friendly?"

"What does it matter?" returned his friend peevishly.

"No, but *is* he?" said Dick.

"Yes, of course. What do I care whether he is or not?"

Emboldened as it seemed by this reply to enter into a more general conversation, Mr. Swiveller plainly laid himself out to captivate our attention.

He began by remarking that soda water, though a good thing in the abstract, was apt to lie cold upon the stomach unless qualified with ginger, or a small infusion of brandy, which latter article he held to be preferable in all cases, saving for the one consideration of expense. Nobody venturing to dispute these positions, he proceeded to observe that the human hair was a great retainer of tobacco smoke, and that the young gentlemen of Westminster and Eton, after eating vast quantities of apples to conceal any scent of cigars from their anxious friends, were usually detected in consequence of their heads possessing this remarkable property; whence he concluded that if the Royal Society would turn their attention to the circumstance, and endeavour to find in the resources of science a means of preventing such untoward revelations, they might indeed be looked upon as benefactors to mankind. These opinions being equally incontrovertible with those he had already pronounced, he went on to inform us that Jamaica rum, though unquestionably an agreeable spirit of great richness and flavour, had the drawback of remaining constantly present to the taste next

day; and nobody being venturous enough to argue this point either, he increased in confidence and became yet more companionable and communicative.

"It's a devil of a thing, gentlemen," said Mr. Swiveller, "when relations fall out and disagree. If the wing of friendship should never moult a feather, the wing of relationship should never be clipped, but be always expanded and serene. Why should a grandson and grandfather peg away at each other with mutual violence when all might be bliss and concord? Why not jine hands and forgit it?"

"Hold your tongue," said his friend.

"Sir," replied Mr. Swiveller, "don't you interrupt the chair. Gentlemen, how does the case stand upon the present occasion? Here is a jolly old grandfather—I say it with the utmost respect—and here is a wild young grandson. The jolly old grandfather says to the wild young grandson, 'I have brought you up and educated you, Fred; I have put you in the way of getting on in life; you have bolted a little out of the course, as young fellows often do; and you shall never have another chance, nor the ghost of half a one.' The wild young grandson makes answer to this and says, 'You're as rich as rich can be; you have been at no uncommon expense on my account, you're saving up piles of money for my little sister that lives with you in a secret, stealthy, hugger-mugger kind of way, and with no manner of enjoyment—why can't you stand a trifle for your grown-up relation?' The jolly old grandfather unto this retorts, not only that he declines to fork out with that cheerful readiness which is always so agreeable and pleasant in a gentleman of his time of life, but that he will blow up, and call names, and make reflections whenever they meet. Then the plain question is, ain't it a pity that this state of things should continue, and how much better would it be for the old gentleman to hand over a reasonable amount of tin, and make it all right and comfortable?"

Having delivered this oration with a great many waves and flourishes of the hand, Mr. Swiveller abruptly thrust the head of his cane into his mouth, as if to prevent himself from impairing the effect of his speech by adding one other word.

"Why do you hunt and persecute me, God help me?" said the old man, turning to his grandson. "Why do you bring your profligate companions here? How often am I to tell you that my life is one of care and self-denial, and that I am poor?"

"How often am I to tell you." returned the

other, looking coldly at him, "that I know better?"

"You have chosen your own path," said the old man. "Follow it. Leave Nell and I to toil and work."

"Nell will be a woman soon," returned the other, "and, bred in your faith, she'll forget her brother unless he shows himself sometimes."

"Take care," said the old man with sparkling eyes, "that she does not forget you when you would have her memory keenest. Take care that the day don't come when you walk barefoot in the streets, and she rides by in a gay carriage of her own."

"You mean when she has your money?" retorted the other. "How like a poor man he talks!"

"And yet," said the old man, dropping his voice and speaking like one who thinks aloud, "how poor we are, and what a life it is! The cause is a young child's, guiltless of all harm or wrong, but nothing goes well with it! Hope and patience, hope and patience!"

These words were uttered in too low a tone to reach the ears of the young men. Mr. Swiveller appeared to think that they implied some mental struggle consequent upon the powerful effect of his address, for he poked his friend with his cane and whispered his conviction that he had administered "a clincher," and that he expected a commission on the profits. Discovering his mistake after awhile, he appeared to grow rather sleepy and discontented, and had more than once suggested the propriety of an immediate departure, when the door opened, and the child herself appeared.

### CHAPTER III.

**T**HE child was closely followed by an elderly man of remarkably hard features and forbidding aspect, and so low in stature as to be quite a dwarf, though his head and face were large enough for the body of a giant. His black eyes were restless, sly, and cunning; his mouth and chin bristly with the stubble of a coarse hard beard; and his complexion was one of that kind which never looks clean or wholesome. But what added most to the grotesque expression of his face was a ghastly smile, which, appearing to be the mere result of habit and to have no connection with any mirthful or complacent feeling, constantly revealed the few discoloured fangs that were yet scattered in his



month, and gave him the aspect of a panting dog. His dress consisted of a large high-crowned hat, a worn dark suit, a pair of capacious shoes, and a dirty white neckerchief sufficiently limp and crumpled to disclose the greater portion of his wiry throat. Such hair as he had was of a grizzled black, cut short and straight upon his temples, and hanging in a frouzy fringe about his ears. His hands, which were of a rough coarse grain, were very dirty; his finger-nails were crooked, long, and yellow.

There was ample time to note these particulars, for besides that they were sufficiently obvious without very close observation, some moments elapsed before any one broke silence. The child advanced timidly towards her brother, and put her hand in his; the dwarf (if we may call him so) glanced keenly at all present; and the curiosity-dealer, who plainly had not expected his uncouth visitor, seemed disconcerted and embarrassed.

"Ah!" said the dwarf, who with his hand stretched out above his eyes had been surveying the young man attentively, "that should be your grandson, neighbour!"

"Say rather that he should not be," replied the old man. "But he is."

"And that?" said the dwarf, pointing to Dick Swiveller.

"Some friend of his, as welcome here as he," said the old man.

"And that?" inquired the dwarf, wheeling round and pointing straight at me.

"A gentleman who was so good as to bring Nell home the other night when she lost her way, coming from your house."

The little man turned to the child as if to chide her or express his wonder, but, as she was talking to the young man, held his peace, and bent his head to listen.

"Well, Nelly," said the young fellow aloud. "Do they teach you to hate me, eh?"

"No, no. For shame! Oh no!" cried the child.

"To love me, perhaps?" pursued her brother with a sneer.

"To do neither," she returned. "They never speak to me about you. Indeed, they never do."

"I dare be bound for that," he said, darting a bitter look at the grandfather. "I dare be bound for that, Nell. Oh! I believe you there!"

"But I love you dearly, Fred," said the child.

"No doubt!"

"I do indeed, and always will," the child repeated with great emotion, "but oh! if you would leave off vexing him and making him unhappy, then I could love you more."

"I see!" said the young man as he stooped carelessly over the child, and, having kissed her, pushed her from him. "There—get you away now you have said your lesson. You needn't whimper. We part good friends enough, if that's the matter."

He remained silent, following her with his eyes, until she had gained her little room and closed the door; and then, turning to the dwarf, said abruptly:

"Harkee, Mr. —"

"Meaning me?" returned the dwarf. "Quilp is my name. You might remember. It's not a long one—Daniel Quilp."

"Harkee, Mr. Quilp, then," pursued the other. "You have some influence with my grandfather there."

"Some," said Mr. Quilp emphatically.

"And are in a few of his mysteries and secrets."

"A few," replied Quilp with equal dryness.

"Then let me tell him once for all, through you, that I will come into and go out of this place as often as I like, so long as he keeps Nell here; and that, if he wants to be quit of me, he must first be quit of her. What have I done to be made a bugbear of, and to be shunned and dreaded as if I brought the plague? He'll tell you that I have no natural affection; and that I care no more for Nell, for her own sake, than I do for him. Let him say so. I care for the whim, then, of coming to and fro and reminding her of my existence. I *will* see her when I please. That's my point. I came here to-day to maintain it, and I'll come here again fifty times with the same object, and always with the same success. I said I would stop till I had gained it. I have done so, and now my visit's ended. Come, Dick."

"Stop!" cried Mr. Swiveller, as his companion turned towards the door. "Sir!"

"Sir, I am your humble servant," said Mr. Quilp, to whom the monosyllable was addressed.

"Before I leave the gay and festive scene, and halls of dazzling light, sir," said Mr. Swiveller, "I will, with your permission, attempt a slight remark. I came here, sir, this day, under the impression that the old min was friendly."

"Proceed, sir," said Daniel Quilp; for the orator had made a sudden stop.

"Inspired by this idea and the sentiments it awakened, sir, and feeling as a mutual friend that badgering, baiting, and bullying was not the sort of thing calculated to expand the souls and promote the social harmony of the contending parties, I took upon myself to suggest a course which is *the* course to be adopted on the

present occasion. Will you allow me to whisper half a syllable, sir?"

Without waiting for the permission he sought, Mr. Swiveller stepped up to the dwarf, and, leaning on his shoulder and stooping down to get at his ear, said in a voice which was perfectly audible to all present:

"The watchword to the old min is—fork."

"Is what?" demanded Quilp.

"Is fork, sir, fork," replied Mr. Swiveller, slapping his pocket. "You are awake, sir?"

The dwarf nodded. Mr. Swiveller drew back and nodded likewise, then drew a little further back and nodded again, and so on. By these means he in time reached the door, where he gave a great cough to attract the dwarf's attention, and gain an opportunity of expressing, in dumb-show, the closest confidence and most inviolable secrecy. Having performed the serious pantomime that was necessary for the due conveyance of these ideas, he cast himself upon his friend's track, and vanished.

"Humph!" said the dwarf with a sour look and a shrug of his shoulders, "so much for dear relations. Thank God, I acknowledge none! Nor need you either," he added, turning to the old man, "if you were not as weak as a reed, and nearly as senseless."

"What would you have me do?" he retorted in a kind of helpless desperation. "It is easy to talk and sneer. What would you have me do?"

"What would I do if I was in your case?" said the dwarf.

"Something violent, no doubt."

"You're right there," returned the little man, highly gratified by the compliment, for such he evidently considered it; and grinning like a devil as he rubbed his dirty hands together. "Ask Mrs. Quilp, pretty Mrs. Quilp, obedient, timid, loving Mrs. Quilp. But that reminds me—I have left her all alone, and she will be anxious and know not a moment's peace till I return. I know she's always in that condition when I'm away, though she doesn't dare to say so, unless I lead her on and tell her she may speak freely, and I won't be angry with her. Oh! well-trained Mrs. Quilp!"

The creature appeared quite horrible, with his monstrous head and little body, as he rubbed his hands slowly round, and round, and round again—with something fantastic even in his manner of performing this slight action—and, dropping his shaggy brows and cocking his chin in the air, glanced upward with a stealthy look of exultation that an imp might have copied and appropriated to himself.

"Here," he said, putting his hand into his

breast and sidling up to the old man as he spoke; "I brought it myself for fear of accidents, as, being in gold, it was something large and heavy for Nell to carry in her bag. She need be accustomed to such loads betimes, though, neighbour, for she will carry weight when you are dead."

"Heaven send she may! I hope so," said the old man with something like a groan.

"Hope so!" echoed the dwarf, approaching close to his ear. "Neighbour, I would I knew in what good investment all these supplies are sunk. But you are a deep man, and keep your secret close."

"My secret!" said the other with a haggard look. "Yes, you're right—I—I—keep it close—very close."

He said no more, but, taking the money, turned away with a slow uncertain step, and pressed his hand upon his head like a weary and dejected man. The dwarf watched him sharply, while he passed into the little sitting-room and locked it in an iron safe above the chimney-piece; and, after musing for a short space, prepared to take his leave, observing that unless he made good haste, Mrs. Quilp would certainly be in fits on his return.

"And so, neighbour," he added, "I'll turn my face homewards, leaving my love for Nelly, and hoping she may never lose her way again, though her doing so *has* procured me an honour I didn't expect." With that, he bowed and leered at me, and with a keen glance around which seemed to comprehend every object within his range of vision, however small or trivial, went his way.

I had several times essayed to go myself, but the old man had always opposed it and entreated me to remain. As he renewed his entreaties on our being left alone, and adverted with many thanks to the former occasion of our being together, I willingly yielded to his persuasions, and sat down, pretending to examine some curious miniatures and a few old medals which he placed before me. It needed no great pressing to induce me to stay, for if my curiosity had been excited on the occasion of my first visit, it certainly was not diminished now.

Nell joined us before long, and bringing some needlework to the table, sat by the old man's side. It was pleasant to observe the fresh flowers in the room, the pet bird with a green bough shading his little cage, the breath of freshness and youth which seemed to rustle through the old dull house and hover round the child. It was curious, but not so pleasant, to turn from the beauty and grace of the girl, to the stooping



figure, careworn face, and jaded aspect of the old man. As he grew weaker and more feeble, what would become of this lonely little creature; poor protector as he was, say that he died—what would her fate be then?

The old man almost answered my thoughts, as he laid his hand on hers, and spoke aloud.

"I'll be of better cheer, Nell," he said; "there must be good fortune in store for thee—I do not ask it for myself, but thee. Such miseries must fall on thy innocent head without it, that I cannot believe but that, being tempted, it will come at last!"

She looked cheerfully into his face, but made no answer.

"When I think," said he, "of the many years—many in thy short life—that thou hast lived alone with me; of thy monotonous existence, knowing no companions of thy own age, nor any childish pleasures; of the solitude in which thou hast grown to be what thou art, and in which thou hast lived apart from nearly all thy kind but one old man: I sometimes fear I have dealt hardly by thee, Nell."

"Grandfather!" cried the child in unfeigned surprise.

"Not in intention—no, no," said he. "I have ever looked forward to the time that should enable thee to mix among the gayest and prettiest, and take thy station with the best. But I still look forward, Nell, I still look forward, and if I should be forced to leave thee, meanwhile, how have I fitted thee for struggles with the world? The poor bird yonder is as well qualified to encounter it, and be turned adrift upon its mercies. Hark! I hear Kit outside. Go to him, Nell, go to him."

She rose, and hurrying away, stopped, turned back, and put her arms about the old man's neck, then left him and hurried away again—but faster this time to hide her falling tears.

"A word in your ear, sir," said the old man in a hurried whisper. "I have been rendered uneasy by what you said the other night, and can only plead that I have done all for the best—that it is too late to retract, if I could (though I cannot)—and that I hope to triumph yet. All is for her sake. I have borne great poverty myself, and would spare her the sufferings that poverty carries with it. I would spare her the miseries that brought her mother, my own dear child, to an early grave. I would leave her—not with resources which could be easily spent or squandered away, but with what would place her beyond the reach of want for ever. You mark me, sir? She shall have no pittance, but a fortune. Hush! I can say no more than

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that, now or at any other time, and she is here again!"

The eagerness with which all this was poured into my ear, the trembling of the hand with which he clasped my arm, the strained and starting eyes he fixed upon me, the wild vehemence and agitation of his manner, filled me with amazement. All that I had heard and seen, and a great part of what he had said himself, led me to suppose that he was a wealthy man. I could form no comprehension of his character, unless he were one of those miserable wretches who, having made gain the sole end and object of their lives, and having succeeded in amassing great riches, are constantly tortured by the dread of poverty, and beset by fears of loss and ruin. Many things he had said, which I had been at a loss to understand, were quite reconcilable with the idea thus presented to me, and at length I concluded that beyond all doubt he was one of this unhappy race.

The opinion was not the result of hasty consideration, for which, indeed, there was no opportunity at that time, as the child came back directly, and soon occupied herself in preparations for giving Kit a writing lesson, of which it seemed he had a couple every week, and one regularly on that evening, to the great mirth and enjoyment both of himself and his instructress. To relate how it was a long time before his modesty could be so far prevailed upon as to admit of his sitting down in the parlour, in the presence of an unknown gentleman—how, when he did sit down, he tucked up his sleeves and squared his elbows and put his face close to the copy-book and squinted horribly at the lines—how, from the very first moment of having the pen in his hand, he began to wallow in blots, and to daub himself with ink up to the very roots of his hair—how, if he did by accident form a letter properly, he immediately smeared it out again with his arm in his preparations to make another—how, at every fresh mistake, there was a fresh burst of merriment from the child, and a louder and not less hearty laugh from poor Kit himself—and how there was all the way through, notwithstanding, a gentle wish on her part to teach, and an anxious desire on his to learn—to relate all these particulars would no doubt occupy more space and time than they deserve. It will be sufficient to say that the lesson was given—that evening passed and night came on—that the old man again grew restless and impatient—that he quitted the house secretly at the same hour as before—and that the child was once more left alone within its gloomy walls.

And now that I have carried this history so

far in my own character, and introduced these personages to the reader, I shall, for the convenience of the narrative, detach myself from its further course, and leave those who have prominent and necessary parts in it to speak and act for themselves.

#### CHAPTER IV.

**M**R. AND MRS. QUILP resided on Tower Hill; and in her bower on Tower Hill Mrs. Quilp was left to pine the absence of her lord, when he quitted her on the business which he has been already seen to transact.

Mr. Quilp could scarcely be said to be of any particular trade or calling, though his pursuits were diversified and his occupations numerous. He collected the rents of whole colonies of filthy streets and alleys by the water-side, advanced money to the seamen and petty officers of merchant vessels, had a share in the ventures of divers mates of East Indiamen, smoked his smuggled cigars under the very nose of the Custom House, and made appointments on 'Change with men in glazed hats and round jackets pretty well every day. On the Surrey side of the river was a small, rat-infested, dreary yard called "Quilp's Wharf," in which were a little wooden counting-house burrowing all awry in the dust, as if it had fallen from the clouds and ploughed into the ground; a few fragments of rusty anchors; several large iron rings; some piles of rotten wood; and two or three heaps of old sheet copper, crumpled, cracked, and battered. On Quilp's Wharf, Daniel Quilp was a ship-breaker, yet to judge from these appearances he must either have been a ship-breaker on a very small scale, or broken his ships up very small indeed. Neither did the place present any extraordinary aspect of life or activity, as its only human occupant was an amphibious boy in a canvas suit, whose sole change of occupation was from sitting on the head of a pile and throwing stones into the mud when the tide was out, to standing with his hands in his pockets gazing listlessly on the motion and on the bustle of the river at high water.

The dwarf's lodging on Tower Hill comprised, besides the needful accommodation for himself and Mrs. Quilp, a small sleeping-closet for that lady's mother, who resided with the couple, and waged perpetual war with Daniel; of whom, notwithstanding, she stood in no slight dread. Indeed, the ugly creature contrived by

some means or other—whether by his ugliness or his ferocity or his natural cunning is no great matter—to impress with a wholesome fear of his anger most of those with whom he was brought into daily contact and communication. Over nobody had he such complete ascendancy as Mrs. Quilp herself—a pretty little, mild-spoken, blue-eyed woman, who, having allied herself in wedlock to the dwarf in one of those strange infatuations of which examples are by no means scarce, performed a sound practical penance for her folly every day of her life.

It has been said that Mrs. Quilp was pining in her bower. In her bower she was, but not alone, for besides the old lady, her mother, of whom mention has recently been made, there were present some half-dozen ladies of the neighbourhood who had happened by a strange accident (and also by a little understanding among themselves) to drop in one after another, just about tea-time. This being a season favourable to conversation, and the room being a cool, shady, lazy kind of place, with some plants at the open window shutting out the dust, and interposing pleasantly enough between the tea-table within and the old Tower without, it is no wonder that the ladies felt an inclination to talk and linger, especially when there are taken into account the additional inducements of fresh butter, new bread, shrimps, and water-cresses.

Now, the ladies being together under these circumstances, it was extremely natural that the discourse should turn upon the propensity of mankind to tyrannise over the weaker sex, and the duty that devolved upon the weaker sex to resist that tyranny and assert their rights and dignity. It was natural for four reasons: firstly, because Mrs. Quilp, being a young woman and notoriously under the dominion of her husband, ought to be excited to rebel; secondly, because Mrs. Quilp's parent was known to be laudably shrewish in her disposition, and inclined to resist male authority; thirdly, because each visitor wished to show for herself how superior she was in this respect to the generality of her sex; and fourthly, because the company, being accustomed to scandalise each other in pairs, were deprived of their usual subject of conversation now that they were all assembled in close friendship, and had consequently no better employment than to attack the common enemy.

Moved by these considerations, a stout lady opened the proceedings by inquiring, with an air of great concern and sympathy, how Mr. Quilp was; whereunto Mr. Quilp's wife's mother replied sharply, "Oh! he was well enough—nothing much was ever the matter with him—



and ill weeds were sure to thrive." All the ladies then sighed in concert, shook their heads gravely, and looked at Mrs. Quilp as at a martyr.

"Ah!" said the spokeswoman, "I wish you'd give her a little of your advice, Mrs. Jiniwin"—Mrs. Quilp had been a Miss Jiniwin it should be observed—"nobody knows better than you, ma'am, what us women owe to ourselves."

"Owe indeed, ma'am!" replied Mrs. Jiniwin. "When my poor husband, her dear father, was alive, if he had ever ventur'd a cross word to me, I'd have——" The good old lady did not finish the sentence, but she twisted off the head of a shrimp with a vindictiveness which seemed to imply that the action was in some degree a substitute for words. In this light it was clearly understood by the other party, who immediately replied with great approbation, "You quite enter into my feelings, ma'am, and it's jist what I'd do myself."

"But you have no call to do it," said Mrs. Jiniwin. "Luckily for you, you have no more occasion to do it than I had."

"No woman need have, if she was true to herself," rejoined the stout lady.

"Do you hear that, Betsy?" said Mrs. Jiniwin in a warning voice. "How often have I said the very same words to you, and almost gone down on my knees when I spoke 'em!"

Poor Mrs. Quilp, who had looked in a state of helplessness from one face of condolence to another, coloured, smiled, and shook her head doubtfully. This was the signal for a general clamour, which, beginning in a low murmur, gradually swelled into a great noise, in which everybody spoke at once, and all said that she, being a young woman, had no right to set up her opinions against the experiences of those who knew so much better; that it was very wrong of her not to take the advice of people who had nothing at heart but her good; that it was next door to being downright ungrateful to conduct herself in that manner; that if she had no respect for herself, she ought to have some for other women, all of whom she compromised by her meekness; and that if she had no respect for other women, the time would come when other women would have no respect for her; and she would be very sorry for that, they could tell her. Having dealt out these admonitions, the ladies fell to a more powerful assault than they had yet made upon the mixed tea, new bread, fresh butter, shrimps, and water-cresses, and said that their vexation was so great to see her going on like that, that they could hardly bring themselves to eat a single morsel.

"It's all very fine to talk," said Mrs. Quilp

with much simplicity, "but I know that, if I was to die to-morrow, Quilp could marry anybody he pleased—now that he could, I know!"

There was quite a scream of indignation at this idea. Marry whom he pleased! They would like to see him dare to think of marrying any of them; they would like to see the faintest approach to such a thing. One lady (a widow) was quite certain she would stab him if he hinted at it.

"Very well," said Mrs. Quilp, nodding her head; "as I said just now, it's very easy to talk, but I say again that I know—that I'm sure—Quilp has such a way with him when he likes, that the best-looking woman here couldn't refuse him if I was dead, and she was free, and he chose to make love to her. Come!"

Everybody bridled up at this remark, as much as to say, "I know you mean me. Let him try—that's all." And yet for some hidden reason they were all angry with the widow, and each lady whispered in her neighbour's ear that it was very plain the said widow thought herself the person referred to, and what a puss she was!

"Mother knows," said Mrs. Quilp, "that what I say is quite correct, for she often said so before we were married. Didn't you say so, mother?"

This inquiry involved the respected lady in rather a delicate position, for she certainly had been an active party in making her daughter Mrs. Quilp, and, besides, it was not supporting the family credit to encourage the idea that she had married a man whom nobody else would have. On the other hand, to exaggerate the captivating qualities of her son-in-law would be to weaken the cause of revolt, in which all her energies were deeply engaged. Beset by these opposing considerations, Mrs. Jiniwin admitted the powers of insinuation, but denied the right to govern, and with a timely compliment to the stout lady brought back the discussion to the point from which it had strayed.

"Oh! It's a sensible and proper thing indeed, what Mrs. George has said!" exclaimed the old lady. "If women are only true to themselves!—But Betsy isn't, and more's the shame and pity."

"Before I'd let a man order me about as Quilp orders her," said Mrs. George; "before I'd consent to stand in awe of a man as she does of him, I'd—I'd kill myself, and write a letter first to say he did it!"

This remark being loudly commended and approved of, another lady (from the Minorities) put in her word:

"Mr. Quilp may be a very nice man," said this lady, "and I suppose there's no doubt he

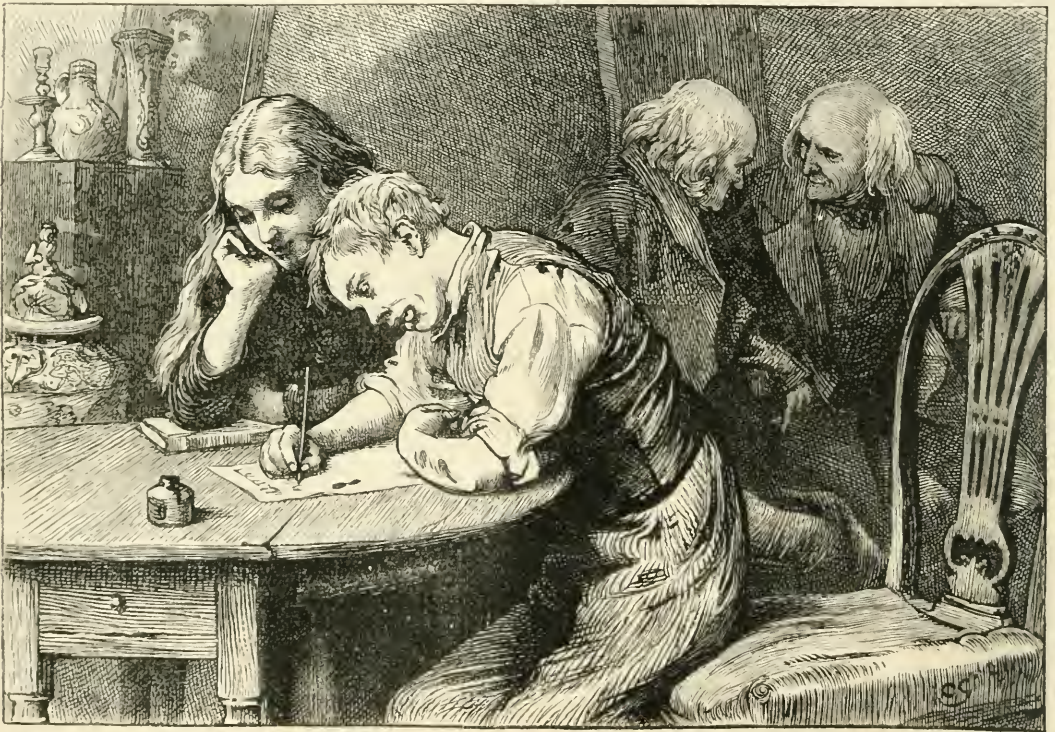
is, because Mrs. Quilp says he is, and Mrs. Jiniwin says he is, and they ought to know, or nobody does. But still he is not quite a—what one calls a handsome man, nor quite a young man neither, which might be a little excuse for him if anything could be; whereas his wife is young, and is good-looking, and is a woman—which is the great thing after all.”

This last clause, being delivered with extraordinary pathos, elicited a corresponding murmur from the hearers, stimulated by which the lady went on to remark that if such a husband

was cross and unreasonable with such a wife, then—

“If he is!” interposed the mother, putting down her teacup and brushing the crumbs out of her lap, preparatory to making a solemn declaration. “If he is! He is the greatest tyrant that ever lived, she daren’t call her soul her own, he makes her tremble with a word and even with a look, he frightens her to death, and she hasn’t the spirit to give him a word back, no, not a single word.”

Notwithstanding that the fact had been no-



“WHEN HE DID SIT DOWN, HE TUCKED UP HIS SLEEVES AND SQUARED HIS ELBOWS AND PUT HIS FACE CLOSE TO THE COPY-BOOK.”

torious beforehand to all the tea-drinkers, and had been discussed and expatiated on at every tea-drinking in the neighbourhood for the last twelve months, this official communication was no sooner made than they all began to talk at once, and to vie with each other in vehemence and volubility. Mrs. George remarked that people would talk, that people had often said this to her before, that Mrs. Simmons then and there present had told her so twenty times, that she had always said, “No, Henrietta Simmons, unless I see it with my own eyes and hear it

with my own ears, I never will believe it.” Mrs. Simmons corroborated this testimony, and added strong evidence of her own. The lady from the Minories recounted a successful course of treatment under which she had placed her own husband, who, from manifesting one month after marriage unequivocal symptoms of the tiger, had by this means become subdued into a perfect lamb. Another lady recounted her own personal struggle and final triumph, in the course whereof she had found it necessary to call in her mother and two aunts, and to weep incessantly night and



day for six weeks. A third, who in the general confusion could secure no other listener, fastened herself upon a young woman still unmarried who happened to be amongst them, and conjured her, as she valued her own peace of mind and happiness, to profit by this solemn occasion, to take example from the weakness of Mrs. Quilp, and from that time forth to direct her whole thoughts to taming and subduing the rebellious spirit of man. The noise was at its height, and half the company had elevated their voices into a perfect shriek in order to drown the voices of the other half, when Mrs. Jiniwin was seen to change colour and shake her forefinger stealthily, as if exhorting them to silence. Then, and not until then, Daniel Quilp himself, the cause and occasion of all this clamour, was observed to be in the room, looking on and listening with profound attention.

"Go on, ladies, go on," said Daniel. "Mrs. Quilp, pray ask the ladies to stop to supper, and have a couple of lobsters and something light and palatable."

"I—I—didn't ask them to tea, Quilp," stammered his wife. "It's quite an accident."

"So much the better, Mrs. Quilp; these accidental parties are always the pleasantest," said the dwarf, rubbing his hands so hard that he seemed to be engaged in manufacturing, of the dirt with which they were incrustated, little charges for pop-guns. "What! Not going, ladies? You are not going, surely?"

His fair enemies tossed their heads slightly as they sought their respective bonnets and shawls, but left all verbal contention to Mrs. Jiniwin, who, finding herself in the position of champion, made a faint struggle to sustain the character.

"And why *not* stop to supper, Quilp," said the old lady, "if my daughter had a mind?"

"To be sure," rejoined Daniel. "Why not?"

"There's nothing dishonest or wrong in a supper, I hope?" said Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Surely not," returned the dwarf. "Why should there be? Nor anything unwholesome either, unless there's lobster-salad or prawns, which I'm told are not good for digestion."

"And you wouldn't like *your* wife to be attacked with that, or anything else that would make her uneasy, would you?" said Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Not for a score of worlds," replied the dwarf with a grin. "Not even to have a score of mothers-in-law at the same time—and what a blessing that would be!"

"My daughter's your wife, Mr. Quilp, certainly," said the old lady with a giggle, meant for satirical, and to imply that he needed to be reminded of the fact; "your wedded wife."

"So she is certainly. So she is," observed the dwarf.

"And she has a right to do as she likes, I hope, Quilp," said the old lady, trembling, partly with anger and partly with a secret fear of her impish son-in-law.

"Hope she has!" he replied. "Oh! Don't you know she has? Don't you know she has, Mrs. Jiniwin?"

"I know she ought to have, Quilp, and would have if she was of my way of thinking."

"Why an't you of your mother's way of thinking, my dear?" said the dwarf, turning round and addressing his wife. "Why don't you always imitate your mother, my dear? She's the ornament of her sex—your father said so every day of his life, I am sure he did."

"Her father was a blessed creature, Quilp, and worth twenty thousand of some people," said Mrs. Jiniwin; "twenty hundred million thousand."

"I should like to have known him," remarked the dwarf. "I dare say he was a blessed creature then; but I'm sure he is now. It was a happy release. I believe he had suffered a long time?"

The old lady gave a gasp, but nothing came of it; Quilp resumed, with the same malice in his eye and the same sarcastic politeness on his tongue.

"You look ill, Mrs. Jiniwin; I know you have been exciting yourself too much—talking perhaps, for it is your weakness. Go to bed. Do go to bed."

"I shall go when I please, Quilp, and not before."

"But please to go now. Do please to go now," said the dwarf.

The old woman looked angrily at him, but retreated as he advanced, and falling back before him, suffered him to shut the door upon her and bolt her out among the guests, who were by this time crowding down-stairs. Being left alone with his wife, who sat trembling in a corner with her eyes fixed upon the ground, the little man planted himself before her, at some distance, and folding his arms, looked steadily at her for a long time without speaking.

"Oh, you nice creature!" were the words with which he broke silence; smacking his lips as if this were no figure of speech, and she were actually a sweetmeat. "Oh, you precious darling! Oh, you de-licious charmer!"

Mrs. Quilp sobbed; and, knowing the nature of her pleasant lord, appeared quite as much alarmed by these compliments as she would have been by the most extreme demonstrations of violence.

"She's such," said the dwarf with a ghastly grin,—“such a jewel, such a diamond, such a pearl, such a ruby, such a golden casket set with gems of all sorts! She's such a treasure! I'm so fond of her!”

The poor little woman shivered from head to foot; and raising her eyes to his face with an imploring look, suffered them to droop again, and sobbed once more.

"The best of her is," said the dwarf, advancing with a sort of skip, which, what with the crookedness of his legs, the ugliness of his face, and the mockery of his manner, was perfectly goblin-like;—"the best of her is that she's so meek, and she's so mild, and she never has a will of her own, and she has such an insinuating mother!"

Uttering these latter words with a gloating maliciousness, within a hundred degrees of which no one but himself could possibly approach, Mr. Quilp planted his two hands on his knees, and straddling his legs out very wide apart, stooped slowly down, and down, and down, until, by screwing his head very much on one side, he came between his wife's eyes and the floor.

"Mrs. Quilp!"

"Yes, Quilp."

"Am I nice to look at? Should I be the handsomest creature in the world if I had but whiskers? Am I quite a lady's man as it is? Am I, Mrs. Quilp?"

Mrs. Quilp dutifully replied, "Yes, Quilp;" and, fascinated by his gaze, remained looking timidly at him, while he treated her with a succession of such horrible grimaces, as none but himself and nightmares had the power of assuming. During the whole of this performance, which was somewhat of the longest, he preserved a dead silence, except when, by an unexpected skip or leap, he made his wife start backward with an irrepressible shriek. Then he chuckled.

"Mrs. Quilp," he said at last.

"Yes, Quilp," she meekly replied.

Instead of pursuing the theme he had in his mind, Quilp rose, folded his arms again, and looked at her more sternly than before, while she averted her eyes and kept them on the ground.

"Mrs. Quilp."

"Yes, Quilp."

"If ever you listen to these beldames again, I'll bite you."

With this laconic threat, which he accompanied with a snarl that gave him the appearance of being particularly in earnest, Mr. Quilp bade her clear the tea-board away, and bring the rum.

The spirit being set before him in a huge case-bottle, which had originally come out of some ship's locker, he ordered cold water and the box of cigars; and these being supplied, he settled himself in an arm-chair with his large head and face squeezed up against the back, and his little legs planted on the table.

"Now, Mrs. Quilp," he said; "I feel in a smoking humour, and shall probably blaze away all night. But sit where you are, if you please, in case I want you."

His wife returned no other reply than the customary "Yes, Quilp," and the small lord of the creation took his first cigar and mixed his first glass of grog. The sun went down and the stars peeped out, the Tower turned from its own proper colours to grey, and from grey to black, the room became perfectly dark and the end of the cigar a deep fiery red, but still Mr. Quilp went on smoking and drinking in the same position, and staring listlessly out of window with the dog-like smile always on his face, save when Mrs. Quilp made some involuntary movement of restlessness or fatigue; and then it expanded into a grin of delight.

## CHAPTER V.

**W**HETHER Mr. Quilp took any sleep by snatches of a few winks at a time, or whether he sat with his eyes wide open all night long, certain it is that he kept his cigar alight, and kindled every fresh one from the ashes of that which was nearly consumed, without requiring the assistance of a candle. Nor did the striking of the clocks, hour after hour, appear to inspire him with any sense of drowsiness, or any natural desire to go to rest; but rather to increase his wakefulness, which he showed, at every such indication of the progress of the night, by a suppressed cackling in his throat, and a motion of his shoulders, like one who laughs heartily, but at the same time slyly and by stealth.

At length the day broke, and poor Mrs. Quilp, shivering with the cold of early morning and harassed by fatigue and want of sleep, was discovered sitting patiently on her chair, raising her eyes at intervals in mute appeal to the compassion and clemency of her lord, and gently reminding him by an occasional cough that she was still unpardoned, and that her penance had been of long duration. But her dwarfish spouse still smoked his cigar and drank his rum without



heeding her; and it was not until the sun had some time risen, and the activity and noise of city day were rife in the street, that he deigned to recognise her presence by any word or sign. He might not have done so even then, but for certain impatient tappings at the door, which seemed to denote that some pretty hard knuckles were actively engaged upon the other side.

"Why, dear me!" he said, looking round with a malicious grin, "it's day! Open the door, sweet Mrs. Quilp!"

His obedient wife withdrew the bolt, and her lady mother entered.

Now, Mrs. Jiniwin bounced into the room with great impetuosity; for, supposing her son-in-law to be still abed, she had come to relieve her feelings by pronouncing a strong opinion upon his general conduct and character. Seeing that he was up and dressed, and that the room appeared to have been occupied ever since she quitted it on the previous evening, she stopped short in some embarrassment.

Nothing escaped the hawk's eye of the ugly little man, who, perfectly understanding what passed in the old lady's mind, turned uglier still in the fulness of his satisfaction, and bade her good morning with a leer of triumph.

"Why, Betsy," said the old woman, "you haven't been a—you don't mean to say you've been a——"

"Sitting up all night?" said Quilp, supplying the conclusion of the sentence. "Yes, she has!"

"All night!" cried Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Ay, all night. Is the dear old lady deaf?" said Quilp with a smile of which a frown was part. "Who says man and wife are bad company? Ha, ha! The time has flown."

"You're a brute!" exclaimed Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Come, come," said Quilp, wilfully misunderstanding her, of course, "you mustn't call her names. She's married now, you know. And though she *did* beguile the time and keep me from my bed, you must not be so tenderly careful of me as to be out of humour with her. Bless you for a dear old lady! Here's your health!"

"I am *much* obliged to you," returned the old woman, testifying by a certain restlessness in her hands a vehement desire to shake her matronly fist at her son-in-law. "Oh! I'm very much obliged to you!"

"Grateful soul!" cried the dwarf. "Mrs. Quilp."

"Yes, Quilp," said the timid sufferer.

"Help your mother to get breakfast, Mrs.

Quilp. I am going to the wharf this morning—the earlier the better, so be quick."

Mrs. Jiniwin made a faint demonstration of rebellion by sitting down in a chair near the door, and folding her arms as if in a resolute determination to do nothing. But a few whispered words from her daughter, and a kind inquiry from her son-in-law whether she felt faint, with a hint that there was abundance of cold water in the next apartment, routed these symptoms effectually, and she applied herself to the prescribed preparations with sullen diligence.

While they were in progress, Mr. Quilp withdrew to the adjoining room, and turning back his coat collar, proceeded to smear his countenance with a damp towel of very unwholesome appearance, which made his complexion rather more cloudy than it had been before. But, while he was thus engaged, his caution and inquisitiveness did not forsake him. With a face as sharp and cunning as ever, he often stopped, even in this short process, and stood listening for any conversation in the next room, of which he might be the theme.

"Ah!" he said after a short effort of attention, "it was not the towel over my ears; I thought it wasn't. I'm a little hunchy villain and a monster, am I, Mrs. Jiniwin? Oh!"

The pleasure of this discovery called up the old dog-like smile in full force. When he had quite done with it, he shook himself in a very dog-like manner, and rejoined the ladies.

Mr. Quilp now walked up to the front of a looking-glass, and was standing there, putting on his neckerchief, when Mrs. Jiniwin, happening to be behind him, could not resist the inclination she felt to shake her fist at her tyrant son-in-law. It was the gesture of an instant, but as she did so, and accompanied the action with a menacing look, she met his eye in the glass, catching her in the very act. The same glance at the mirror conveyed to her the reflection of a horribly grotesque and distorted face with the tongue lolling out; and the next instant the dwarf, turning about, with a perfectly bland and placid look, inquired in a tone of great affection,

"How are you now, my dear old darling?"

Slight and ridiculous as the incident was, it made him appear such a little fiend, and withal such a keen and knowing one, that the old woman felt too much afraid of him to utter a single word, and suffered herself to be led with extraordinary politeness to the breakfast-table. Here, he by no means diminished the impression he had just produced, for he ate hard eggs, shell and all, devoured gigantic prawns with the heads and tails on, chewed tobacco and water-

crosses at the same time and with extraordinary greediness, drank boiling tea without winking, bit his fork and spoon till they bent again, and in short performed so many horrifying and uncommon acts that the women were nearly frightened out of their wits, and began to doubt if he were really a human creature. At last, having gone through these proceedings and many others which were equally a part of his system, Mr. Quilp left them, reduced to a very obedient and humbled state, and betook himself to the river-side, where he took boat for the wharf on which he had bestowed his name.

It was flood tide when Daniel Quilp sat himself down in the wherry to cross to the opposite shore. A fleet of barges were coming lazily on, some sideways, some head first, some stern first; all in a wrong-headed, dogged, obstinate way, bumping up against the larger craft, running under the bows of steamboats, getting into every kind of nook and corner where they had no business, and being crunched on all sides like so many walnut shells; while each, with its pair of long sweeps struggling and splashing in the water, looked like some lumbering fish in pain. In some of the vessels at anchor all hands were busily engaged in coiling ropes, spreading out sails to dry, taking in or discharging their cargoes; in others, no life was visible but two or three tarry boys, and perhaps a barking dog running to and fro upon the deck, or scrambling up to look over the side and bark the louder for the view. Coming slowly on through the forest of masts was a great steam-ship, beating the water in short impatient strokes with her heavy paddles, as though she wanted room to breathe, and advancing in her huge bulk like a sea monster among the minnows of the Thames. On either hand were long black tiers of colliers; between them vessels slowly working out of harbour with sails glistening in the sun, and creaking noise on board, re-echoed from a hundred quarters. The water and all upon it was in active motion, dancing and buoyant and bubbling up; while the old grey Tower and piles of building on the shore, with many a church spire shooting up between, looked coldly on, and seemed to disdain their chafing, restless neighbour.

Daniel Quilp, who was not much affected by a bright morning, save in so far as it spared him the trouble of carrying an umbrella, caused himself to be put ashore hard by the wharf, and proceeded thither through a narrow lane which, partaking of the amphibious character of its frequenters, had as much water as mud in its composition, and a very liberal supply of both. Arrived at his destination, the first object that

presented itself to his view was a pair of very imperfectly shod feet elevated in the air with the soles upwards, which remarkable appearance was referable to the boy, who, being of an eccentric spirit and having a natural taste for tumbling, was now standing on his head, and contemplating the aspect of the river under these uncommon circumstances. He was speedily brought on his heels by the sound of his master's voice, and as soon as his head was in its right position, Mr. Quilp, to speak expressively in the absence of a better verb, "punched it" for him.

"Come, you let me alone," said the boy, parrying Quilp's hand with both his elbows alternately. "You'll get something you won't like if you don't, and so I tell you."

"You dog," snarled Quilp, "I'll beat you with an iron rod, I'll scratch you with a rusty nail, I'll pinch your eyes, if you talk to me—I will!"

With these threats he clenched his hand again, and dexterously diving in between the elbows and catching the boy's head as it dodged from side to side, gave it three or four good hard knocks. Having now carried his point and insisted on it, he left off.

"You won't do it again," said the boy, nodding his head and drawing back, with the elbows ready in case of the worst; "now!"

"Stand still, you dog!" said Quilp. "I won't do it again, because I have done it as often as I want. Here. Take the key."

"Why don't you hit one of your size?" said the boy, approaching very slowly.

"Where is there one of my size, you dog?" returned Quilp. "Take the key, or I'll brain you with it." Indeed, he gave him a smart tap with the handle as he spoke. "Now, open the counting-house."

The boy sulkily complied, muttering at first, but desisting when he looked round and saw that Quilp was following him with a steady look. And here it may be remarked, that between this boy and the dwarf there existed a strange kind of mutual liking. How born or bred, or how nourished upon blows and threats on one side, and retorts and defiances on the other, is not to the purpose. Quilp would certainly suffer nobody to contradict him but the boy, and the boy would assuredly not have submitted to be so knocked about by anybody but Quilp, when he had the power to run away at any time he chose.

"Now," said Quilp, passing into the wooden counting-house, "you mind the wharf. Stand upon your head again, and I'll cut one of your feet off."

The boy made no answer, but, directly Quilp had shut himself in, stood on his head before



the door, then walked on his hands to the back and stood on his head there, and then to the opposite side and repeated the performance. There were, indeed, four sides to the counting-house, but he avoided that one where the window was, deeming it probable that Quilp would be looking out of it. This was prudent, for in point of fact the dwarf, knowing his disposition, was lying in wait at a little distance from the sash, armed with a large piece of wood, which, being rough and jagged, and studded in many parts with broken nails, might possibly have hurt him.

It was a dirty little box, this counting-house,

with nothing in it but an old rickety desk and two stools, a hat-peg, an ancient almanac, an inkstand with no ink and the stump of one pen, and an eight-day clock which hadn't gone for eighteen years at least, and of which the minute hand had been twisted off for a toothpick. Daniel Quilp pulled his hat over his brows, climbed on to the desk (which had a flat top), and stretching his short length upon it, went to sleep with the ease of an old practitioner; intending, no doubt, to compensate himself for the deprivation of last night's rest by a long and sound nap.



"DANIEL QUILP SAT HIMSELF DOWN IN THE WHERRY TO CROSS TO THE OPPOSITE SHORE."

Sound it might have been, but long it was not, for he had not been asleep a quarter of an hour when the boy opened the door and thrust in his head, which was like a bundle of badly-picked oakum. Quilp was a light sleeper, and started up directly.

"Here's somebody for you," said the boy.

"Who?"

"I don't know."

"Ask!" said Quilp, seizing the trifle of wood before mentioned, and throwing it at him with such dexterity that it was well the boy dis-

appeared before it reached the spot on which he had stood. "Ask, you dog."

Not caring to venture within range of such missiles again, the boy discreetly sent, in his stead, the first cause of the interruption, who now presented herself at the door.

"What, Nelly!" cried Quilp.

"Yes," said the child, hesitating whether to enter or retreat, for the dwarf just roused, with his dishevelled hair hanging all about him, and a yellow handkerchief over his head, was something fearful to behold; "it's only me, sir."

"Come in," said Quilp, without getting off the desk. "Come in. Stay. Just look out into the yard, and see whether there's a boy standing on his head."

"No, sir," replied Nell. "He's on his feet."

"You're sure he is?" said Quilp. "Well! Now come in and shut the door. What's your message, Nelly?"

The child handed him a letter. Mr. Quilp, without changing his position otherwise than to turn over a little more on his side and rest his chin on his hand, proceeded to make himself acquainted with its contents.

## CHAPTER VI.

**L**ITTLE NELL stood timidly by, with her eyes raised to the countenance of Mr. Quilp as he read the letter, plainly showing by her looks that while she entertained some fear and distrust of the little man, she was much inclined to laugh at his uncouth appearance and grotesque attitude. And yet there was visible on the part of the child a painful anxiety for his reply, and a consciousness of his power to render it disagreeable or distressing, which was strongly at variance with this impulse, and restrained it more effectually than she could possibly have done by any efforts of her own.

That Mr. Quilp was himself perplexed, and that in no small degree, by the contents of the letter, was sufficiently obvious. Before he had got through the first two or three lines he began to open his eyes very wide and to frown most horribly, the next two or three caused him to scratch his head in an uncommonly vicious manner, and when he came to the conclusion he gave a long dismal whistle indicative of surprise and dismay. After folding and laying it down beside him, he bit the nails of all his ten fingers with extreme voracity; and taking it up sharply, read it again. The second perusal was to all appearance as unsatisfactory as the first, and plunged him into a profound reverie, from which he awakened to another assault upon his nails and a long stare at the child, who with her eyes turned towards the ground awaited his further pleasure.

"Hallo here!" he said at length, in a voice, and with a suddenness, which made the child start as though a gun had been fired off at her ear. "Nelly!"

"Yes, sir!"

"Do you know what's inside this letter, Nell?"

"No, sir!"

"Are you sure, quite sure, quite certain, upon your soul?"

"Quite sure, sir."

"Do you wish you may die if you do know, hey?" said the dwarf.

"Indeed I don't know," returned the child.

"Well!" muttered Quilp as he marked her earnest look. "I believe you. Humph! Gone already! Gone in four-and-twenty hours! What the devil has he done with it? That's the mystery!"

This reflection set him scratching his head, and biting his nails, once more. While he was thus employed his features gradually relaxed into what was with him a cheerful smile, but which in any other man would have been a ghastly grin of pain; and, when the child looked up again, she found that he was regarding her with extraordinary favour and complacency.

"You look very pretty to-day, Nelly, charmingly pretty. Are you tired, Nelly?"

"No, sir. I'm in a hurry to get back, for he will be anxious while I am away."

"There's no hurry, little Nell, no hurry at all," said Quilp. "How should you like to be my number two, Nelly?"

"To be what, sir?"

"My number two, Nelly; my second; my Mrs. Quilp," said the dwarf.

The child looked frightened, but seemed not to understand him, which Mr. Quilp observing, hastened to explain his meaning more distinctly.

"To be Mrs. Quilp the second, when Mrs. Quilp the first is dead, sweet Nell," said Quilp, wrinkling up his eyes and luring her towards him with his bent forefinger, "to be my wife, my little cherry-cheeked, red-lipped wife. Say that Mrs. Quilp lives five years, or only four, you'll be just the proper age for me. Ha, ha! Be a good girl, Nelly, a very good girl, and see if one of these days you don't come to be Mrs. Quilp of Tower Hill."

So far from being sustained and stimulated by this delightful prospect, the child shrunk from him, and trembled. Mr. Quilp, either because frightening anybody afforded him a constitutional delight, or because it was pleasant to contemplate the death of Mrs. Quilp number one, and the elevation of Mrs. Quilp number two to her post and title, or because he was determined, for purposes of his own, to be agreeable and good-humoured at that particular



time, only laughed and feigned to take no heed of her alarm.

"You shall come with me to Tower Hill, and see Mrs. Quilp that is, directly," said the dwarf. "She's very fond of you, Nell, though not so fond as I am. You shall come home with me."

"I must go back indeed," said the child. "He told me to return directly I had the answer."

"But you haven't it, Nelly," retorted the dwarf, "and won't have it, and can't have it, until I have been home, so you see that, to do your errand, you must go with me. Reach me yonder hat, my dear, and we'll go directly." With that, Mr. Quilp suffered himself to roll gradually off the desk until his short legs touched the ground, when he got upon them and led the way from the counting-house to the wharf outside, where the first objects that presented themselves were the boy who had stood on his head, and another young gentleman of about his own stature, rolling in the mud together, locked in a tight embrace, and cuffing each other with mutual heartiness.

"It's Kit!" cried Nelly, clasping her hands, "poor Kit who came with me! Oh, pray stop them, Mr. Quilp!"

"I'll stop 'em," cried Quilp, diving into the little counting-house and returning with a thick stick, "I'll stop 'em! Now, my boys, fight away. I'll fight you both. I'll take both of you, both together, both together!"

With which defiance the dwarf flourished his cudgel, and dancing round the combatants, and treading upon them and skipping over them, in a kind of frenzy, laid about him, now on one and now on the other, in a most desperate manner, always aiming at their heads, and dealing such blows as none but the veriest little savage would have inflicted. This being warmer work than they had calculated upon, speedily cooled the courage of the belligerents, who scrambled to their feet and called for quarter.

"I'll beat you to a pulp, you dogs," said Quilp, vainly endeavouring to get near either of them for a parting blow. "I'll bruise you till you're copper-coloured. I'll break your faces till you haven't a profile between you, I will."

"Come, you drop that stick, or it'll be worse for you," said his boy, dodging round him and watching an opportunity to rush in; "you drop that stick."

"Come a little nearer, and I'll drop it on your skull, you dog," said Quilp with gleaming eyes; "a little nearer—nearer yet."

But the boy declined the invitation until his master was apparently a little off his guard,

when he darted in, and, seizing the weapon, tried to wrest it from his grasp. Quilp, who was as strong as a lion, easily kept his hold until the boy was tugging at it with his utmost power, when he suddenly let it go and sent him reeling backwards, so that he fell violently upon his head. The success of this manœuvre tickled Mr. Quilp beyond description, and he laughed and stamped upon the ground as at a most irresistible jest.

"Never mind," said the boy, nodding his head and rubbing it at the same time; "you see if ever I offer to strike anybody again because they say you're a uglier dwarf than can be seen anywheres for a penny, that's all."

"Do you mean to say I'm not, you dog?" returned Quilp.

"No!" retorted the boy.

"Then what do you fight on my wharf for, you villain?" said Quilp.

"Because he said so," replied the boy, pointing to Kit, "not because you ain't."

"Then why did he say," bawled Kit, "that Miss Nelly was ugly, and that she and my master was obliged to do whatever his master liked? Why did he say that?"

"He said what he did because he's a fool, and you said what you did because you're very wise and clever—almost too clever to live, unless you're very careful of yourself, Kit," said Quilp with great suavity in his manner, but still more of quiet malice about his eyes and mouth. "Here's sixpence for you, Kit. Always speak the truth. At all times, Kit, speak the truth. Lock the counting-house, you dog, and bring me the key."

The other boy, to whom this order was addressed, did as he was told, and was rewarded for his partisanship in behalf of his master by a dexterous rap on the nose with the key, which brought the water into his eyes. Then, Mr. Quilp departed, with the child and Kit, in a boat, and the boy revenged himself by dancing on his head at intervals on the extreme verge of the wharf, during the whole time they crossed the river.

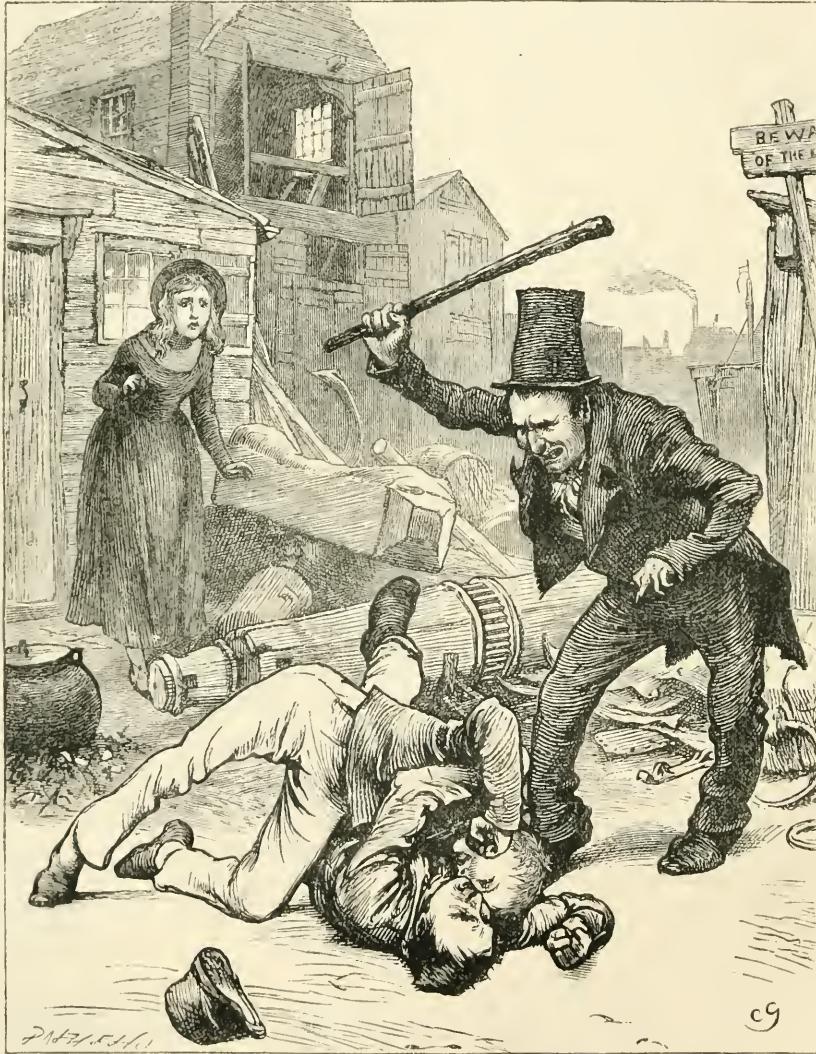
There was only Mrs. Quilp at home, and she, little expecting the return of her lord, was just composing herself for a refreshing slumber when the sound of his footsteps roused her. She had barely time to seem to be occupied in some needlework, when he entered, accompanied by the child; having left Kit down-stairs.

"Here's Nelly Trent, dear Mrs. Quilp," said her husband. "A glass of wine, my dear, and a biscuit, for she has had a long walk. She'll sit with you, my soul, while I write a letter."

Mrs. Quilp looked tremblingly in her spouse's face to know what this unusual courtesy might portend, and, obedient to the summons she saw in his gesture, followed him into the next room.

"Mind what I say to you," whispered Quilp. "See if you can get out of her anything about

her grandfather, or what they do, or how they live, or what he tells her. I've my reasons for knowing, if I can. You women talk more freely to one another than you do to us, and you have a soft, mild way with you that'll win upon her. Do you hear?"



"I'LL BEAT YOU TO A PULP, YOU DOGS."

"Yes, Quilp."

"Go, then. What's the matter now?"

"Dear Quilp," faltered his wife, "I love the child—if you *could* do without making me deceive her——"

The dwarf, muttering a terrible oath, looked

round as if for some weapon with which to inflict condign punishment upon his disobedient wife. The submissive little woman hurriedly entreated him not to be angry, and promised to do as he bade her.

"Do you hear me?" whispered Quilp, nip-



ping and pinching her arm. "Worm yourself into her secrets; I know you can. I'm listening, recollect. If you're not sharp enough I'll creak the door, and woe betide you if I have to creak it much. Go!"

Mrs. Quilp departed according to order. Her amiable husband, ensconcing himself behind the partly-opened door, and applying his ear close to it, began to listen with a face of great craftiness and attention.

Poor Mrs. Quilp was thinking, however, in what manner to begin, or what kind of inquiries she could make; it was not until the door, creaking in a very urgent manner, warned her to proceed without further consideration, that the sound of her voice was heard.

"How very often you have come backwards and forwards lately to Mr. Quilp, my dear!"

"I have said so to grandfather a hundred times," returned Nell innocently.

"And what has he said to that?"

"Only sighed, and dropped his head, and seemed so sad and wretched that if you could have seen him I am sure you must have cried; you could not have helped it more than I, I know. How that door creaks!"

"It often does," returned Mrs. Quilp with an uneasy glance towards it. "But your grandfather—he used not to be so wretched?"

"Oh no!" said the child eagerly, "so different! We were once so happy, and he so cheerful and contented! You cannot think what a sad change has fallen on us since."

"I am very, very sorry to hear you speak like this, my dear!" said Mrs. Quilp. And she spoke the truth.

"Thank you," returned the child, kissing her cheek; "you are always kind to me, and it is a pleasure to talk to you. I can speak to no one else about him, but poor Kit. I am very happy still. I ought to feel happier perhaps than I do, but you cannot think how it grieves me sometimes to see him alter so."

"He'll alter again, Nelly," said Mrs. Quilp, "and be what he was before."

"Oh, if God would only let that come about!" said the child with streaming eyes; "but it is a long time now, since he first began to—I thought I saw that door moving!"

"It's the wind," said Mrs. Quilp faintly. "Began to—?"

"To be so thoughtful and dejected, and to forget our old way of spending the time in the long evenings," said the child. "I used to read to him by the fireside, and he sat listening, and when I stopped and we began to talk, he told me about my mother, and how she once looked

and spoke just like me when she was a little child. Then he used to take me on his knee, and try to make me understand that she was not lying in her grave, but had flown to a beautiful country beyond the sky, where nothing died or ever grew old. We were very happy once!"

"Nelly, Nelly!" said the poor woman, "I can't bear to see one as young as you so sorrowful. Pray don't cry."

"I do so very seldom," said Nell, "but I have kept this to myself a long time, and I am not quite well, I think, for the tears come into my eyes, and I cannot keep them back. I don't mind telling you my grief, for I know you will not tell it to any one again."

Mrs. Quilp turned away her head and made no answer.

"Then," said the child, "we often walked in the fields and among the green trees, and when we came home at night, we liked it better for being tired, and said what a happy place it was. And if it was dark and rather dull, we used to say what did it matter to us? for it only made us remember our last walk with greater pleasure, and look forward to our next one. But, now, we never have these walks, and though it is the same house, it is darker and much more gloomy than it used to be. Indeed!"

She paused here, but, though the door creaked more than once, Mrs. Quilp said nothing.

"Mind you don't suppose," said the child earnestly, "that grandfather is less kind to me than he was. I think he loves me better every day, and is kinder and more affectionate than he was the day before. You do not know how fond he is of me!"

"I'm sure he loves you dearly," said Mrs. Quilp.

"Indeed, indeed he does!" cried Nell, "as dearly as I love him. But I have not told you the greatest change of all, and this you must never breathe again to any one. He has no sleep or rest, but that which he takes by day in his easy-chair; for, every night and nearly all night long, he is away from home."

"Nelly!"

"Hush!" said the child, laying her finger on her lip and looking round. "When he comes home in the morning, which is generally just before day, I let him in. Last night he was very late, and it was quite light. I saw that his face was deadly pale, that his eyes were blood-shot, and that his legs trembled as he walked. When I had gone to bed again, I heard him groan. I got up and ran back to him, and heard him say, before he knew that I was there, that he could not bear his life much longer, and

if it was not for the child, would wish to die. What shall I do? Oh! what shall I do?"

The fountains of her heart were opened; the child, overpowered by the weight of her sorrows and anxieties, by the first confidence she had ever shown, and the sympathy with which her little tale had been received, hid her face in the arms of her helpless friend, and burst into a passion of tears.

In a few moments Mr. Quilp returned, and expressed the utmost surprise to find her in this condition, which he did very naturally and with admirable effect; for that kind of acting had been rendered familiar to him by long practice, and he was quite at home in it.

"She's tired, you see, Mrs. Quilp," said the dwarf, squinting in a hideous manner to imply that his wife was to follow his lead. "It's a long way from her home to the wharf, and then she was alarmed to see a couple of young scoundrels fighting, and was timorous on the water besides. All this together has been too much for her. Poor Nell!"

Mr. Quilp unintentionally adopted the very best means he could have devised for the recovery of his young visitor, by patting her on the head. Such an application from any other hand might not have produced a remarkable effect, but the child shrunk so quickly from his touch, and felt such an instinctive desire to get out of his reach, that she rose directly and declared herself ready to return.

"But you'd better wait, and dine with Mrs. Quilp and me," said the dwarf.

"I have been away too long, sir, already," returned Nell, drying her eyes.

"Well," said Mr. Quilp, "if you will go, you will, Nelly. Here's the note. It's only to say that I shall see him to-morrow, or maybe next day, and that I couldn't do that little business for him this morning. Good-bye, Nelly. Here, you sir, take care of her, d'ye hear?"

Kit, who appeared at the summons, deigned to make no reply to so needless an injunction, and after staring at Quilp in a threatening manner, as if he doubted whether he might not have been the cause of Nelly shedding tears, and felt more than half disposed to revenge the fact upon him on the mere suspicion, turned about and followed his young mistress, who had by this time taken her leave of Mrs. Quilp and departed.

"You're a keen questioner, an't you, Mrs. Quilp?" said the dwarf, turning upon her as soon as they were left alone.

"What more could I do?" returned his wife mildly.

"What more could you do?" sneered Quilp.

"Couldn't you have done something less? Couldn't you have done what you had to do, without appearing in your favourite part of the crocodile, you minx?"

"I am very sorry for the child, Quilp," said his wife. "Surely I've done enough. I've led her on to tell her secret when she supposed we were alone; and you were by, God forgive me!"

"You led her on! You did a great deal truly!" said Quilp. "What did I tell you about making me creak the door? It's lucky for you that, from what she let fall, I've got the clue I want, for if I hadn't, I'd have visited the failure upon you."

Mrs. Quilp, being fully persuaded of this, made no reply. Her husband added with some exultation:

"But you may thank your fortunate stars—the same stars that made you Mrs. Quilp—you may thank them that I'm upon the old gentleman's track, and have got a new light. So let me hear no more about this matter, now, or at any other time, and don't get anything too nice for dinner, for I shan't be home to it."

So saying, Mr. Quilp put his hat on and took himself off, and Mrs. Quilp, who was afflicted beyond measure by the recollection of the part she had just acted, shut herself up in her chamber, and smothering her head in the bedclothes, bemoaned her fault more bitterly than many less tender-hearted persons would have mourned a much greater offence; for, in the majority of cases, conscience is an elastic and very flexible article, which will bear a deal of stretching, and adapt itself to a great variety of circumstances. Some people, by prudent management and leaving it off piece by piece, like a flannel waistcoat in warm weather, even contrive, in time, to dispense with it altogether; but there be others who can assume the garment and throw it off at pleasure; and this, being the greatest and most convenient improvement, is the one most in vogue.

## CHAPTER VII.

**F**RED," said Mr. Swiveller, "remember the once popular melody of 'Begone dull care;' fan the sinking flame of hilarity with the wing of friendship; and pass the rosy wine!"

Mr. Richard Swiveller's apartments were in the neighbourhood of Drury Lane, and, in addition to this conveniency of situation, had the advantage of being over a tobacconist's shop, so that he was enabled



to procure a refreshing sneeze at any time by merely stepping out on the staircase, and was saved the trouble and expense of maintaining a snuff-box. It was in these apartments that Mr. Swiveller made use of the expressions above recorded, for the consolation and encouragement of his desponding friend; and it may not be uninteresting or improper to remark, that even these brief observations partook in a double sense of the figurative and poetical character of Mr. Swiveller's mind, as the rosy wine was in fact represented by one glass of cold gin-and-water, which was replenished, as occasion required, from a bottle and jug upon the table, and was passed from one to another, in a scarcity of tumblers which, as Mr. Swiveller's was a bachelor's establishment, may be acknowledged without a blush. By a like pleasant fiction his single chamber was always mentioned in the plural number. In its disengaged times, the tobacconist had announced it in his window as "apartments" for a single gentleman, and Mr. Swiveller, following up the hint, never failed to speak of it as his rooms, his lodgings, or his chambers: conveying to his hearers a notion of indefinite space, and leaving their imaginations to wander through long suites of lofty halls at pleasure.

In this flight of fancy, Mr. Swiveller was assisted by a deceptive piece of furniture, in reality a bedstead, but in semblance a bookcase, which occupied a prominent situation in his chamber, and seemed to defy suspicion and challenge inquiry. There is no doubt that, by day, Mr. Swiveller firmly believed this secret convenience to be a bookcase and nothing more; that he closed his eyes to the bed, resolutely denied the existence of the blankets, and spurned the bolster from his thoughts. No word of its real use, no hint of its nightly service, no allusion to its peculiar properties, had ever passed between him and his most intimate friends. Implicit faith in the deception was the first article of his creed. To be the friend of Swiveller you must reject all circumstantial evidence, all reason, observation, and experience, and repose a blind belief in the bookcase. It was his pet weakness, and he cherished it.

"Fred!" said Mr. Swiveller, finding that his former adjuration had been productive of no effect. "Pass the rosy!"

Young Trent, with an impatient gesture, pushed the glass towards him, and fell again into the moody attitude from which he had been unwillingly roused.

"I'll give you, Fred," said his friend, stirring the mixture, "a little sentiment appropriate to the occasion. Here's may the——"

"Pshaw!" interposed the other. "You worry me to death with your chattering. You can be merry under any circumstances."

"Why, Mr. Trent," returned Dick, "there is a proverb which talks about being merry and wise. There are some people who can be merry and can't be wise, and some who can be wise (or think they can) and can't be merry. I'm one of the first sort. If the proverb's a good 'un, I suppose it's better to keep to half of it than none; at all events, I'd rather be merry and not wise, than like you — neither one nor t'other."

"Bah!" muttered his friend peevishly.

"With all my heart," said Mr. Swiveller. "In the polite circles I believe this sort of thing isn't usually said to a gentleman in his own apartments, but never mind that. Make yourself at home." Adding to this retort an observation to the effect that his friend appeared to be rather "cranky" in point of temper, Richard Swiveller finished the rosy and applied himself to the composition of another glassful, in which, after tasting it with great relish, he proposed a toast to an imaginary company.

"Gentlemen, I'll give you, if you please, Success to the ancient family of the Swivellers, and good luck to Mr. Richard in particular—Mr. Richard, gentlemen," said Dick with great emphasis, "who spends all his money on his friends, and is *Bah!*'d for his pains. Hear, hear!"

"Dick!" said the other, returning to his seat after having paced the room twice or thrice, "will you talk seriously for two minutes, if I show you a way to make your fortune with very little trouble?"

"You've shown me so many," returned Dick; "and nothing has come of any of 'em but empty pockets——"

"You'll tell a different story of this one, before a very long time is over," said his companion, drawing his chair to the table. "You saw my sister Nell?"

"What about her?" returned Dick.

"She has a pretty face, has she not?"

"Why, certainly," replied Dick, "I must say for her that there's not any very strong family likeness between her and you."

"Has she a pretty face?" repeated his friend impatiently.

"Yes," said Dick, "she has a pretty face, a very pretty face. What of that?"

"I'll tell you," returned his friend. "It's very plain that the old man and I will remain at daggers-drawn to the end of our lives, and that I have nothing to expect from him. You see that, I suppose?"

"A bat might see that with the sun shining," said Dick.

"It's equally plain that the money which the old flint—rot him—first taught me to expect that I should share with her at his death, will all be hers, is it not?"

"I should say it was," replied Dick; "unless the way in which I put the case to him made an impression. It may have done so. It was powerful, Fred. 'Here is a jolly old grandfather'—that was strong, I thought—very friendly and natural. Did it strike you in that way?"

"It didn't strike *him*," returned the other, "so we needn't discuss it. Now look here. Nell is nearly fourteen."

"Fine girl of her age, but small," observed Richard Swiveller parenthetically.

"If I am to go on, be quiet for one minute," returned Trent, fretting at the very slight interest the other appeared to take in the conversation. "Now I'm coming to the point."

"That's right," said Dick.

"The girl has strong affections, and brought up as she has been, may, at her age, be easily influenced and persuaded. If I take her in hand, I will be bound by a very little coaxing and threatening to bend her to my will. Not to beat about the bush (for the advantages of the scheme would take a week to tell), what's to prevent you marrying her?"

Richard Swiveller, who had been looking over the rim of the tumbler while his companion addressed the foregoing remarks to him with great energy and earnestness of manner, no sooner heard these words than he evinced the utmost consternation, and with difficulty ejaculated the monosyllable:

"What!"

"I say, what's to prevent," repeated the other, with a steadiness of manner, of the effect of which upon his companion he was well assured by long experience, "what's to prevent your marrying her?"

"And she 'nearly fourteen!'" cried Dick.

"I don't mean marrying her now," returned the brother angrily; "say in two years' time, in three, in four. Does the old man look like a long-liver?"

"He don't look like it," said Dick, shaking his head, "but these old people—there's no trusting 'em, Fred. There's an aunt of mine down in Dorsetshire that was going to die when I was eight years old, and hasn't kept her word yet. They're so aggravating, so unprincipled, so spiteful—unless there's apoplexy in the family, Fred, you can't calculate upon 'em, and even then they deceive you just as often as not."

"Look at the worst side of the question, then," said Trent as steadily as before, and keeping his eyes upon his friend. "Suppose he lives."

"To be sure," said Dick. "There's the rub."

"I say," resumed his friend, "suppose he lives, and I persuaded, or, if the word sounds more feasible, forced, Nell to a secret marriage with you. What do you think would come of that?"

"A family, and an annual income of nothing to keep 'em on," said Richard Swiveller after some reflection.

"I tell you," returned the other with an increased earnestness, which, whether it were real or assumed, had the same effect on his companion, "that he lives for her, that his whole energies and thoughts are bound up in her, that he would no more disinherit her for an act of disobedience than he would take me into his favour again for any act of obedience or virtue that I could possibly be guilty of. He could not do it. You or any other man with eyes in his head may see that, if he chooses."

"It seems improbable certainly," said Dick, musing.

"It seems improbable because it is improbable," his friend returned. "If you would furnish him with an additional inducement to forgive you, let there be an irreconcilable breach, a most deadly quarrel, between you and me—let there be a pretence of such a thing, I mean, of course—and he'll do so fast enough. As to Nell, constant dropping will wear away a stone; you know you may trust to me as far as she is concerned. So, whether he lives or dies, what does it come to? That you become the sole inheritor of the wealth of this rich old hunk; that you and I spend it together; and that you get, into the bargain, a beautiful young wife."

"I suppose there's no doubt about his being rich," said Dick.

"Doubt! Did you hear what he let fall the other day when we were there? Doubt! What will you doubt next, Dick?"

It would be tedious to pursue the conversation through all its artful windings, or to develop the gradual approaches by which the heart of Richard Swiveller was gained. It is sufficient to know that vanity, interest, poverty, and every spendthrift consideration urged him to look upon the proposal with favour, and that where all other inducements were wanting, the habitual carelessness of his disposition stepped in and still weighed down the scale on the same side. To these impulses must be added the complete ascendancy which his friend had long been accustomed to exercise over him—an ascendancy exerted in the beginning sorely at the expense of the un-



fortunate Dick's purse and prospects, but still maintained without the slightest relaxation, notwithstanding that Dick suffered for all his friend's vices, and was, in nine cases out of ten, looked upon as his designing tempter, when he was indeed nothing but his thoughtless, light-headed tool.

The motives on the other side were something deeper than any which Richard Swiveller entertained or understood, but these being left to their own development, require no present elucidation. The negotiation was concluded very pleasantly, and Mr. Swiveller was in the act of stating in flowery terms that he had no insurmountable objection to marrying anybody plentifully endowed with money or movables, who could be induced to take him, when he was interrupted in his observations by a knock at the door, and the consequent necessity of crying "Come in."

The door was opened, but nothing came in except a soapy arm and a strong gush of tobacco. The gush of tobacco came from the shop downstairs, and the soapy arm proceeded from the body of a servant-girl, who, being then and there engaged in cleaning the stairs, had just drawn it out of a warm pail to take in a letter, which letter she now held in her hand; proclaiming aloud, with that quick perception of surnames peculiar to her class, that it was for Mister Snivelling.

Dick looked rather pale and foolish when he glanced at the direction, and still more so when he came to look at the inside; observing that this was one of the inconveniences of being a lady's man, and that it was very easy to talk as they had been talking, but he had quite forgotten her.

"*Her.* Who?" demanded Trent.

"Sophy Wackles," said Dick.

"Who's she?"

"She's all my fancy painted her, sir, that's what she is," said Mr. Swiveller, taking a long pull at "the rosy," and looking gravely at his friend. "She is lovely, she's divine. You know her."

"I remember," said his companion carelessly. "What of her?"

"Why, sir," returned Dick, "between Miss Sophia Wackles and the humble individual who has now the honour to address you, warm and tender sentiments have been engendered—sentiments of the most honourable and inspiring kind. The Goddess Diana, sir, that calls aloud for the chase, is not more particular in her behaviour than Sophia Wackles; I can tell you that."

"Am I to believe there's anything real in  
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what you say?" demanded his friend. "You don't mean to say that any love-making has been going on?"

"Love-making, yes. Promising, no," said Dick. "There can be no action for breach, that's one comfort. I've never committed myself in writing, Fred."

"And what's in the letter pray?"

"A reminder, Fred, for to-night—a small party of twenty—making two hundred light fantastic toes in all, supposing every lady and gentleman to have the proper complement. I must go, if it's only to begin breaking off the affair—I'll do it, don't you be afraid. I should like to know whether she left this herself. If she did, unconscious of any bar to her happiness, it's affecting, Fred."

To solve this question, Mr. Swiveller summoned the handmaid, and ascertained that Miss Sophy Wackles had indeed left the letter with her own hands; that she had come accompanied, for decorum's sake no doubt, by a younger Miss Wackles; and that, on learning that Mr. Swiveller was at home and being requested to walk up-stairs, she was extremely shocked, and professed that she would rather die. Mr. Swiveller heard this account with a degree of admiration not altogether consistent with the project in which he had just concurred, but his friend attached very little importance to his behaviour in this respect, probably because he knew that he had influence sufficient to control Richard Swiveller's proceedings in this or any other matter, whenever he deemed it necessary, for the advancement of his own purposes, to exert it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

**B**USINESS disposed of, Mr. Swiveller was inwardly reminded of its being nigh dinner-time, and to the intent that his health might not be endangered by long abstinence, dispatched a message to the nearest eating-house, requiring an immediate supply of boiled beef and greens for two. With this demand, however, the eating-house (having experience of its customer) declined to comply, churlishly sending back for answer that if Mr. Swiveller stood in need of beef, perhaps he would be so obliging as to come there and eat it, bringing with him, as grace before meat, the amount of a certain small account which had been long outstanding. Not at all intimidated by this rebuff, but rather sharpened in wits and

appetite, Mr. Swiveller forwarded the same message to another and more distant eating-house, adding to it, by way of rider, that the gentleman was induced to send so far, not only by the great fame and popularity its beef had acquired, but in consequence of the extreme toughness of the beef retailed at the obdurate cook's shop, which rendered it quite unfit not merely for gentlemanly food, but for any human consumption. The good effect of this politic course was demonstrated by the speedy arrival of a small pewter pyramid, curiously constructed of platters and covers, whereof the boiled-beef plates formed the base, and a foaming quart pot the apex; the structure being resolved into its component parts, afforded all things requisite and necessary for a hearty meal, to which Mr. Swiveller and his friend applied themselves with great keenness and enjoyment.

"May the present moment," said Dick, sticking his fork into a large carbuncular potato, "be the worst of our lives! I like this plan of sending 'em with the peel on; there's a charm in drawing a potato from its native element (if I may so express it) to which the rich and powerful are strangers. Ah! 'Man wants but little here below, nor wants that little long!' How true that is!—after dinner."

"I hope the eating-house keeper will want but little, and that *he* may not want that little long," returned his companion; "but I suspect you've no means of paying for this!"

"I shall be passing presently, and I'll call," said Dick, winking his eye significantly. "The waiter's quite helpless. The goods are gone, Fred, and there's an end of it."

In point of fact, it would seem that the waiter felt this wholesome truth, for when he returned for the empty plates and dishes, and was informed by Mr. Swiveller, with dignified carelessness, that he would call and settle when he should be passing presently, he displayed some perturbation of spirit, and muttered a few remarks about "payment on delivery," and "no trust," and other unpleasant subjects, but was fain to content himself with inquiring at what hour it was likely the gentleman would call, in order that being personally responsible for the beef, greens, and sundries, he might take care to be in the way at the time. Mr. Swiveller, after mentally calculating his engagements to a nicety, replied that he should look in at from two minutes before six to seven minutes past; and the man disappearing with this feeble consolation, Richard Swiveller took a greasy memorandum book from his pocket and made an entry therein.

"Is that a reminder, in case you should forget to call?" said Trent with a sneer.

"Not exactly, Fred," replied the imperturbable Richard, continuing to write with a business-like air. "I enter in this little book the names of the streets that I can't go down while the shops are open. This dinner to-day closes Long Acre. I bought a pair of boots in Great Queen Street last week, and made that no thoroughfare too. There's only one avenue to the Strand left open now, and I shall have to stop up that to-night with a pair of gloves. The roads are closing so fast in every direction, that in about a month's time, unless my aunt sends me a remittance, I shall have to go three or four miles out of town to get over the way."

"There's no fear of her failing in the end?" said Trent.

"Why, I hope not," returned Mr. Swiveller, "but the average number of letters it takes to soften her is six, and this time we have got as far as eight without any effect at all. I'll write another to-morrow morning. I mean to blot it a good deal, and shake some water over it out of the pepper-caster, to make it look penitent. 'I'm in such a state of mind that I hardly know what I write'—blot—if you could see me at this minute shedding tears for my past misconduct—pepper-caster—my hand trembles when I think—blot again—if that don't produce the effect, it's all over."

By this time Mr. Swiveller had finished his entry, and he now replaced his pencil in its little sheath and closed the book, in a perfectly grave and serious frame of mind. His friend discovered that it was time for him to fulfil some other engagement, and Richard Swiveller was accordingly left alone, in company with the rosy wine and his own meditations touching Miss Sophy Wackles.

"It's rather sudden," said Dick, shaking his head with a look of infinite wisdom, and running on (as he was accustomed to do) with scraps of verse as if they were only prose in a hurry; "when the heart of a man is depressed with fears, the mist is dispelled when Miss Wackles appears: she's a very nice girl. She's like the red red rose that's newly sprung in June—there's no denying that—she's also like a melody that's sweetly played in tune. It's really very sudden. Not that there's any need, on account of Fred's little sister, to turn cool directly, but it's better not to go too far. If I begin to cool at all, I must begin at once, I see that. There's the chance of an action for breach, that's one reason. There's the chance of Sophy's getting another husband, that's



another. There's the chance of— No, there's no chance of that, but it's as well to be on the safe side.

This undeveloped consideration was the possibility, which Richard Swiveller sought to conceal even from himself, of his not being proof against the charms of Miss Wackles, and in some unguarded moment, by linking his fortunes to hers for ever, of putting it out of his own power to further the notable scheme to which he had so readily become a party. For all these reasons, he decided to pick a quarrel with Miss Wackles without delay, and casting about for a pretext, determined in favour of groundless jealousy. Having made up his mind on this important point, he circulated the glass (from his right hand to his left, and back again) pretty freely, to enable him to act his part with greater discretion, and then, after making some slight improvements in his toilet, bent his steps towards the spot hallowed by the fair object of his meditations.

This spot was at Chelsea, for there Miss Sophia Wackles resided with her widowed mother and two sisters, in conjunction with whom she maintained a very small day-school for young ladies of proportionate dimensions; a circumstance which was made known to the neighbourhood by an oval board over the front first-floor window, whereon appeared, in circumambient flourishes, the words "Ladies' Seminary;" and which was further published and proclaimed at intervals between the hours of half-past nine and ten in the morning, by a straggling and solitary young lady of tender years standing on the scraper on the tips of her toes, and making futile attempts to reach the knocker with her spelling-book. The several duties of instruction in this establishment were thus discharged. English grammar, composition, geography, and the use of the dumb-bells, by Miss Melissa Wackles; writing, arithmetic, dancing, music, and general fascination, by Miss Sophy Wackles; the art of needlework, marking, and samplery, by Miss Jane Wackles; corporal punishment, fasting, and other tortures and terrors, by Mrs. Wackles. Miss Melissa Wackles was the eldest daughter, Miss Sophy the next, and Miss Jane the youngest. Miss Melissa might have seen five-and-thirty summers or thereabouts, and verged on the autumnal; Miss Sophy was a fresh, good-humoured, buxom girl of twenty; and Miss Jane numbered scarcely sixteen years. Mrs. Wackles was an excellent, but rather venomous old lady of three score.

To this Ladies' Seminary, then, Richard Swiveller hied, with designs obnoxious to the

peace of the fair Sophia, who, arrayed in virgin white, embellished by no ornament but one blushing rose, received him on his arrival, in the midst of very elegant, not to say brilliant preparations; such as the embellishment of the room with the little flower-pots which always stood on the window-sill outside, save in windy weather, when they blew into the area; the choice attire of the day-scholars, who were allowed to grace the festival; the unwonted curls of Miss Jane Wackles, who had kept her head during the whole of the preceding day screwed up tight in a yellow play-bill; and the solemn gentility and stately bearing of the old lady and her eldest daughter, which struck Mr. Swiveller as being uncommon, but made no further impression upon him.

The truth is—and, as there is no accounting for tastes, even a taste so strange as this may be recorded without being looked upon as a wilful and malicious invention—the truth is, that neither Mrs. Wackles nor her eldest daughter had at any time greatly favoured the pretensions of Mr. Swiveller: they being accustomed to make slight mention of him as "a gay young man," and to sigh and shake their heads ominously whenever his name was mentioned. Mr. Swiveller's conduct in respect to Miss Sophy having been of that vague and dilatory kind which is usually looked upon as betokening no fixed matrimonial intentions, the young lady herself began in course of time to deem it highly desirable that it should be brought to an issue one way or other. Hence, she had at last consented to play off, against Richard Swiveller, a stricken market gardener known to be ready with his offer on the smallest encouragement, and hence—as this occasion had been specially assigned for the purpose—that great anxiety on her part for Richard Swiveller's presence which had occasioned her to leave the note he has been seen to receive. "If he has any expectations at all, or any means of keeping a wife well," said Mrs. Wackles to her eldest daughter, "he'll state 'em to us now or never."—"If he really cares about me," thought Miss Sophy, "he must tell me so to-night."

But all these sayings and doings and thinkings being unknown to Mr. Swiveller, affected him not in the least; he was debating in his mind how he could best turn jealous, and wishing that Sophy were, for that occasion only, far less pretty than she was, or that she were her own sister, which would have served his turn as well, when the company came, and among them the market gardener, whose name was Cheggs. But Mr. Cheggs came not alone or un-

supported, for he prudently brought along with him his sister, Miss Cheggs, who, making straight to Miss Sophy, and taking her by both hands, and kissing her on both cheeks, hoped in an audible whisper that they had not come too early.

"Too early? No!" replied Miss Sophy.

"Oh, my dear!" rejoined Miss Cheggs in the same whisper as before, "I've been so tormented, so worried, that it's a mercy we were not here at four o'clock in the afternoon. Alick has been in *such* a state of impatience to come! You'd hardly believe that he was dressed before dinner-time, and has been looking at the clock and teasing me ever since. It's all your fault, you naughty thing."

Hereupon Miss Sophy blushed, and Mr. Cheggs (who was bashful before ladies) blushed too, and Miss Sophy's mother and sisters, to prevent Mr. Cheggs from blushing more, lavished civilities and attentions upon him, and left Richard Swiveller to take care of himself. Here was the very thing he wanted; here was good cause, reason, and foundation for pretending to be angry; but having this cause, reason, and foundation which he had come expressly to seek, not expecting to find, Richard Swiveller was angry in sound earnest, and wondered what the devil Cheggs meant by his impudence.

However, Mr. Swiveller had Miss Sophy's hand for the first quadrille (country dances, being low, were utterly proscribed), and so gained an advantage over his rival, who sat despondingly in a corner, and contemplated the glorious figure of the young lady as she moved through the mazy dance. Nor was this the only start Mr. Swiveller had of the market gardener; for, determining to show the family what quality of man they trifled with, and influenced perhaps by his late libations, he performed such feats of agility and such spins and twirls as filled the company with astonishment, and in particular caused a very long gentleman, who was dancing with a very short scholar, to stand quite transfixed by wonder and admiration. Even Mrs. Wackles forgot for the moment to snub three small young ladies who were inclined to be happy, and could not repress a rising thought that to have such a dancer as that in the family would be a pride indeed.

At this momentous crisis, Miss Cheggs proved herself a vigorous and useful ally; for, not confining herself to expressing by scornful smiles a contempt for Mr. Swiveller's accomplishments, she took every opportunity of whispering into Miss Sophy's ear expressions of condolence and sympathy on her being worried by such a ridiculous creature, declaring that she was frightened

to death lest Alick should fall upon him, and beat him, in the fulness of his wrath, and entreating Miss Sophy to observe how the eyes of the said Alick gleamed with love and fury; passions, it may be observed, which, being too much for his eyes, rushed into his nose also, and suffused it with a crimson glow.

"You must dance with Miss Cheggs," said Miss Sophy to Dick Swiveller, after she had herself danced twice with Mr. Cheggs, and made great show of encouraging his advances. "She's such a nice girl—and her brother's quite delightful."

"Quite delightful is he?" muttered Dick. "Quite delighted too, I should say, from the manner in which he's looking this way."

Here Miss Jane (previously instructed for the purpose) interposed her many curls, and whispered her sister to observe how jealous Mr. Cheggs was.

"Jealous! Like his impudence!" said Richard Swiveller.

"His impudence, Mr. Swiveller!" said Miss Jane, tossing her head. "Take care he don't hear you, sir, or you may be sorry for it."

"Oh, pray, Jane——" said Miss Sophy.

"Nonsense!" replied her sister. "Why shouldn't Mr. Cheggs be jealous if he likes? I like that, certainly. Mr. Cheggs has as good a right to be jealous as anybody else has, and perhaps he may have a better right soon, if he hasn't already. You know best about that, Sophy!"

Though this was a concerted plot between Miss Sophy and her sister, originating in humane intentions, and having for its object the inducing Mr. Swiveller to declare himself in time, it failed in its effect; for Miss Jane, being one of those young ladies who are prematurely shrill and shrewish, gave such undue importance to her part, that Mr. Swiveller retired in dudgeon, resigning his mistress to Mr. Cheggs, and conveying a defiance into his looks which that gentleman indignantly returned.

"Did you speak to me, sir?" said Mr. Cheggs, following him into a corner.—"Have the kindness to smile, sir, in order that we may not be suspected.—Did you speak to me, sir?"

Mr. Swiveller looked with a supercilious smile at Mr. Cheggs's toes, then raised his eyes from them to his ankle, from that to his shin, from that to his knee, and so on very gradually, keeping up his right leg, until he reached his waistcoat, when he raised his eyes from button to button until he reached his chin, and travelling straight up the middle of his nose, came at last to his eyes, when he said abruptly:



"No, sir, I didn't."

"Hem!" said Mr. Cheggs, glancing over his shoulder; "have the goodness to smile again, sir. Perhaps you wished to speak to me, sir."

"No, sir, I didn't do that, either."

"Perhaps you may have nothing to say to me *now*, sir," said Mr. Cheggs fiercely.

At these words, Richard Swiveller withdrew his eyes from Mr. Cheggs's face, and travelling down the middle of his nose, and down his waistcoat, and down his right leg, reached his toes again, and carefully surveyed them; this done, he crossed over, and coming up the other leg, and thence approaching by the waistcoat as before, said, when he had got to his eyes, "No, sir, I haven't."

"Oh indeed, sir!" said Mr. Cheggs. "I'm glad to hear it. You know where I'm to be found, I suppose, sir, in case you *should* have anything to say to me?"

"I can easily inquire, sir, when I want to know."

"There's nothing more we need say, I believe, sir?"

"Nothing more, sir." With that they closed the tremendous dialogue by frowning mutually. Mr. Cheggs hastened to tender his hand to Miss Sophy, and Mr. Swiveller sat himself down in a corner in a very moody state.

Hard by this corner, Mrs. Wackles and Miss Wackles were seated, looking on at the dance; and unto Mrs. and Miss Wackles, Miss Cheggs occasionally darted when her partner was occupied with his share of the figure, and made some remark or other which was gall and wormwood to Richard Swiveller's soul. Looking into the eyes of Mrs. and Miss Wackles for encouragement, and sitting very upright and uncomfortable on a couple of hard stools, were two of the day-scholars; and when Miss Wackles smiled, and Mrs. Wackles smiled, the two little girls on the stools sought to curry favour by smiling likewise, in gracious acknowledgment of which attention the old lady frowned them down instantly, and said that if they dared to be guilty of such an impertinence again, they should be sent under convoy to their respective homes. This threat caused one of the young ladies, she being of a weak and trembling temperament, to shed tears, and for this offence they were both filed off immediately, with a dreadful promptitude that struck terror into the souls of all the pupils.

"I've got such news for you," said Miss Cheggs, approaching once more. "Alick has been saying such things to Sophy. Upon my word, you know, it's quite serious and in earnest, that's clear."

"What's he been saying, my dear?" demanded Mrs. Wackles.

"All manner of things," replied Miss Cheggs; "you can't think how out he has been speaking!"

Richard Swiveller considered it advisable to hear no more, but taking advantage of a pause in the dancing, and the approach of Mr. Cheggs to pay his court to the old lady, swaggered with an extremely careful assumption of extreme carelessness towards the door, passing on the way Miss Jane Wackles, who in all the glory of her curls was holding a flirtation (as good practice when no better was to be had) with a feeble old gentleman who lodged in the parlour. Near the door sat Miss Sophy, still fluttered and confused by the attentions of Mr. Cheggs, and by her side Richard Swiveller lingered for a moment to exchange a few parting words.

"My boat is on the shore, and my bark is on the sea, but before I pass this door I will say farewell to thee," murmured Dick, looking gloomily upon her.

"Are you going?" said Miss Sophy, whose heart sunk within her at the result of her stratagem, but who affected a light indifference notwithstanding.

"Am I going!" echoed Dick bitterly. "Yes, I am. What then?"

"Nothing, except that it's very early," said Miss Sophy; "but you are your own master, of course."

"I would that I had been my own mistress too," said Dick, "before I had ever entertained a thought of you. Miss Wackles, I believed you true, and I was blessed in so believing, but now I mourn that e'er I knew a girl so fair, yet so deceiving."

Miss Sophy bit her lip, and affected to look with great interest after Mr. Cheggs, who was quaffing lemonade in the distance.

"I came here," said Dick, rather oblivious of the purpose with which he had really come, "with my bosom expanded, my heart dilated, and my sentiments of a corresponding description. I go away with feelings that may be conceived, but cannot be described: feeling within myself the desolating truth that my best affections have experienced, this night, a stifler!"

"I am sure I don't know what you mean, Mr. Swiveller," said Miss Sophy with downcast eyes. "I'm very sorry if——"

"Sorry, ma'am!" said Dick; "sorry in the possession of a Cheggs! But I wish you a very good night: concluding with this slight remark, that there is a young lady growing up at this present moment for me, who has not only great personal attractions, but great wealth, and who

has requested her next of kin to propose for my hand, which, having a regard for some members of her family, I have consented to promise. It's a gratifying circumstance which you'll be glad to hear, that a young and lovely girl is growing into a woman expressly on my account, and is now saving up for me. I thought I'd mention it. I have now merely to apologise for trespassing so long upon your attention. Good night!"

"There's one good thing springs out of all this," said Richard Swiveller to himself when he had reached home, and was hanging over the candle with the extinguisher in his hand, "which is, that I now go heart and soul, neck and heels, with Fred in all his scheme about little Nelly, and right glad he'll be to find me so strong upon it. He shall know all about that to-morrow, and in the meantime, as it's rather late, I'll try and get a wink or two of the balmy."

"The balmy" came almost as soon as it was courted. In a very few minutes Mr. Swiveller was fast asleep, dreaming that he had married Nelly Trent and come into the property, and that his first act of power was to lay waste the market garden of Mr. Cheggs, and turn it into a brick-field.

#### CHAPTER IX.

**T**HE child, in her confidence with Mrs. Quilp, had but feebly described the sadness and sorrow of her thoughts, or the heaviness of the cloud which overhung her home, and cast dark shadows on its hearth. Besides that it was very difficult to impart to any person not intimately acquainted with the life she led, an adequate sense of its gloom and loneliness, a constant fear of in some way committing or injuring the old man to whom she was so tenderly attached, had restrained her, even in the midst of her heart's overflowing, and made her timid of allusion to the main cause of her anxiety and distress.

For, it was not the monotonous days unchequered by variety and uncheered by pleasant companionship, it was not the dark dreary evenings or the long solitary nights, it was not the absence of every slight and easy pleasure for which young hearts beat high, or the knowing nothing of childhood but its weakness and its easily-wounded spirit, that had wrung such tears from Nell. To see the old man struck down beneath the pressure of some hidden grief, to mark his wavering and unsettled state, to be agitated at times with a dreadful fear that his

mind was wandering, and to trace in his words and looks the dawning of despondent madness; to watch and wait and listen for confirmation of these things day after day, and to feel and know that, come what might, they were alone in the world, with no one to help or advise or care about them—these were causes of depression and anxiety that might have sat heavily on an older breast with many influences at work to cheer and gladden it, but how heavily on the mind of a young child to whom they were ever present, and who was constantly surrounded by all that could keep such thoughts in restless action!

And yet, to the old man's vision, Nell was still the same. When he could, for a moment, disengage his mind from the phantom that haunted and brooded on it always, there was his young companion with the same smile for him, the same earnest words, the same merry laugh, the same love and care that, sinking deep into his soul, seemed to have been present to him through his whole life. And so he went on, content to read the book of her heart from the page first presented to him, little dreaming of the story that lay hidden in its other leaves, and murmuring within himself that at least the child was happy.

She had been once. She had gone singing through the dim rooms, and moving with gay and lightsome step among their dusty treasures, making them older by her young life, and sterner and more grim by her gay and cheerful presence. But, now, the chambers were cold and gloomy, and when she left her own little room to while away the tedious hours, and sat in one of them, she was still and motionless as their inanimate occupants, and had no heart to startle the echoes—hoarse from their long silence—with her voice.

In one of these rooms was a window looking into the street, where the child sat, many and many a long evening, and often far into the night, alone and thoughtful. None are so anxious as those who watch and wait: at these times, mournful fancies came flocking on her mind in crowds.

She would take her station here, at dusk, and watch the people as they passed up and down the street, or appeared at the windows of the opposite houses; wondering whether those rooms were as lonesome as that in which she sat, and whether those people felt it company to see her sitting there, as she did only to see them look out and draw in their heads again. There was a crooked stack of chimneys on one of the roofs, in which, by often looking at them, she had fancied ugly faces that were frowning over at



her and trying to peer into the room; and she felt glad when it grew too dark to make them out, though she was sorry, too, when the man came to light the lamps in the street—for it made it late, and very dull inside. Then, she would draw in her head to look round the room, and see that everything was in its place and hadn't moved; and looking out into the street again, would perhaps see a man passing with a coffin on his back, and two or three others silently following him to a house where somebody lay dead; which made her shudder and think of such things until they suggested afresh the old man's altered face and manner, and a new train of fears and speculations. If he were to die—if sudden illness had happened to him, and he were never to come home again alive—if, one night, he should come home, and kiss and bless her as usual, and after she had gone to bed and had fallen asleep, and was perhaps dreaming pleasantly, and smiling in her sleep, he should kill himself, and his blood come creeping, creeping, on the ground to her own bedroom door! These thoughts were too terrible to dwell upon, and again she would have recourse to the street, now trodden by fewer feet, and darker and more silent than before. The shops were closing fast, and lights began to shine from the upper windows, as the neighbours went to bed. By degrees, these dwindled away and disappeared, or were replaced, here and there, by a feeble rush-candle which was to burn all night. Still, there was one late shop at no great distance which sent forth a ruddy glare upon the pavement even yet, and looked bright and companionable. But, in a little time, this closed, the light was extinguished, and all was gloomy and quiet, except when some stray footsteps sounded on the pavement, or a neighbour, out later than his wont, knocked lustily at his house-door to rouse the sleeping inmates.

When the night had worn away thus far (and seldom now until it had) the child would close the window, and steal softly down-stairs, thinking as she went that if one of those hideous faces below, which often mingled with her dreams, were to meet her by the way, rendering itself visible by some strange light of its own, how terrified she would be. But these fears vanished before a well-trimmed lamp and the familiar aspect of her own room. After praying fervently, and with many bursting tears, for the old man, and the restoration of his peace of mind and the happiness they had once enjoyed, she would lay her head upon the pillow and sob herself to sleep: often starting up again, before the daylight came, to listen for the bell, and respond

to the imaginary summons which had roused her from her slumber.

One night, the third after Nelly's interview with Mrs. Quilp, the old man, who had been weak and ill all day, said he should not leave home. The child's eyes sparkled at the intelligence, but her joy subsided when they reverted to his worn and sickly face.

"Two days," he said, "two whole, clear days have passed, and there is no reply. What *did* he tell thee, Nell?"

"Exactly what I told you, dear grandfather, indeed."

"True," said the old man faintly. "Yes. But tell me again, Nell. My head fails me. What was it that he told thee? Nothing more than that he would see me to-morrow or next day? That was in the note."

"Nothing more," said the child. "Shall I go to him again to-morrow, dear grandfather? Very early? I will be there and back before breakfast."

The old man shook his head, and, sighing mournfully, drew her towards him.

"'Twould be of no use, my dear, no earthly use. But if he deserts me, Nell, at this moment—if he deserts me now, when I should, with his assistance, be recompensed for all the time and money I have lost, and all the agony of mind I have undergone, which makes me what you see, I am ruined, and—worse, far worse than that—have ruined thee, for whom I ventured all. If we are beggars——!"

"What if we are?" said the child boldly. "Let us be beggars and be happy."

"Beggars—and happy!" said the old man. "Poor child!"

"Dear grandfather," cried the girl with an energy which shone in her flushed face, trembling voice, and impassioned gesture, "I am not a child in that, I think; but even if I am, oh, hear me pray that we may beg, or work in open roads or fields, to earn a scanty living, rather than live as we do now!"

"Nelly!" said the old man.

"Yes, yes, rather than live as we do now," the child repeated, more earnestly than before. "If you are sorrowful, let me know why, and be sorrowful too; if you waste away and are paler and weaker every day, let me be your nurse, and try to comfort you. If you are poor, let us be poor together; but let me be with you, do let me be with you; do not let me see such change, and not know why, or I shall break my heart and die. Dear grandfather, let us leave this sad place to-morrow, and beg our way from door to door."

The old man covered his face with his hands,

and hid it in the pillow of the couch on which he lay.

"Let us be beggars," said the child, passing an arm round his neck. "I have no fear but we shall have enough; I am sure we shall. Let us walk through country places, and sleep in fields and under trees, and never think of money again, or anything that can make you sad, but rest at nights, and have the sun and wind upon our faces in the day, and thank God together! Let us never set foot in dark rooms or melancholy houses any more, but wander up and down wherever we like to go; and when you are tired, you shall stop to rest in the pleasantest place that we can find, and I will go and beg for both."

The child's voice was lost in sobs as she dropped upon the old man's neck; nor did she weep alone.

These were not words for other ears, nor was it a scene for other eyes. And yet other ears and eyes were there, and greedily taking in all that passed, and, moreover, they were the ears and eyes of no less a person than Mr. Daniel Quilp, who, having entered unseen when the child first placed herself at the old man's side, refrained—actuated, no doubt, by motives of the purest delicacy—from interrupting the conversation, and stood looking on with his accustomed grin. Standing, however, being a tiresome attitude to a gentleman already fatigued with walking, and the dwarf being one of that kind of persons who usually make themselves at home, he soon cast his eyes upon a chair, into which he skipped with uncommon agility, and, perching himself on the back with his feet upon the seat, was thus enabled to look on and listen with greater comfort to himself, besides gratifying at the same time that taste for doing something fantastic and monkey-like, which on all occasions had strong possession of him. Here, then, he sat, one leg cocked carelessly over the other, his chin resting on the palm of his hand, his head turned a little on one side, and his ugly features twisted into a complacent grimace. And in this position the old man, happening in course of time to look that way, at length chanced to see him: to his unbounded astonishment.

The child uttered a suppressed shriek on beholding this agreeable figure; in their first surprise both she and the old man, not knowing what to say, and half doubting its reality, looked shrinkingly at it. Not at all disconcerted by this reception, Daniel Quilp preserved the same attitude, merely nodding twice or thrice with great condescension. At length the old man pronounced his name, and inquired how he came there.

"Through the door," said Quilp, pointing over his shoulder with his thumb. "I'm not quite small enough to get through keyholes. I wish I was. I want to have some talk with you particularly, and in private—with nobody present, neighbour. Good-bye, little Nelly."

Nell looked at the old man, who nodded to her to retire, and kissed her cheek.

"Ah!" said the dwarf, smacking his lips. "what a nice kiss that was—just upon the rosy part! What a capital kiss!"

Nell was none the slower in going away for this remark. Quilp looked after her with an admiring leer, and, when she had closed the door, fell to complimenting the old man upon her charms.

"Such a fresh, blooming, modest little bud, neighbour," said Quilp, nursing his short leg, and making his eyes twinkle very much: "such a chubby, rosy, cosy, little Nell!"

The old man answered by a forced smile, and was plainly struggling with a feeling of the keenest and most exquisite impatience. It was not lost upon Quilp, who delighted in torturing him, or indeed anybody else, when he could.

"She's so," said Quilp, speaking very slowly, and feigning to be quite absorbed in the subject, "so small, so compact, so beautifully modelled, so fair, with such blue veins, and such a transparent skin, and such little feet, and such winning ways— But bless me, you're nervous! Why, neighbour, what's the matter? I swear to you," continued the dwarf, dismounting from the chair and sitting down in it, with a careful slowness of gesture very different from the rapidity with which he had sprung up unheard, "I swear to you that I had no idea old blood ran so fast or kept so warm. I thought it was sluggish in its course, and cool, quite cool. I am pretty sure it ought to be. Yours must be out of order, neighbour."

"I believe it is," groaned the old man, clasping his head with both hands. "There's burning fever here, and something now and then to which I fear to give a name."

The dwarf said never a word, but watched his companion as he paced restlessly up and down the room, and presently returned to his seat. Here he remained, with his head bowed upon his breast for some time, and then suddenly raising it, said:

"Once, and once for all, have you brought me any money?"

"No!" returned Quilp.

"Then," said the old man, clenching his hands desperately, and looking upward, "the child and I are lost!"



"Neighbour," said Quilp, glancing sternly at him, and beating his hand twice or thrice upon the table to attract his wandering attention, "let me be plain with you, and play a fairer game than when you held all the cards, and I saw but the backs and nothing more. You have no secret from me now."

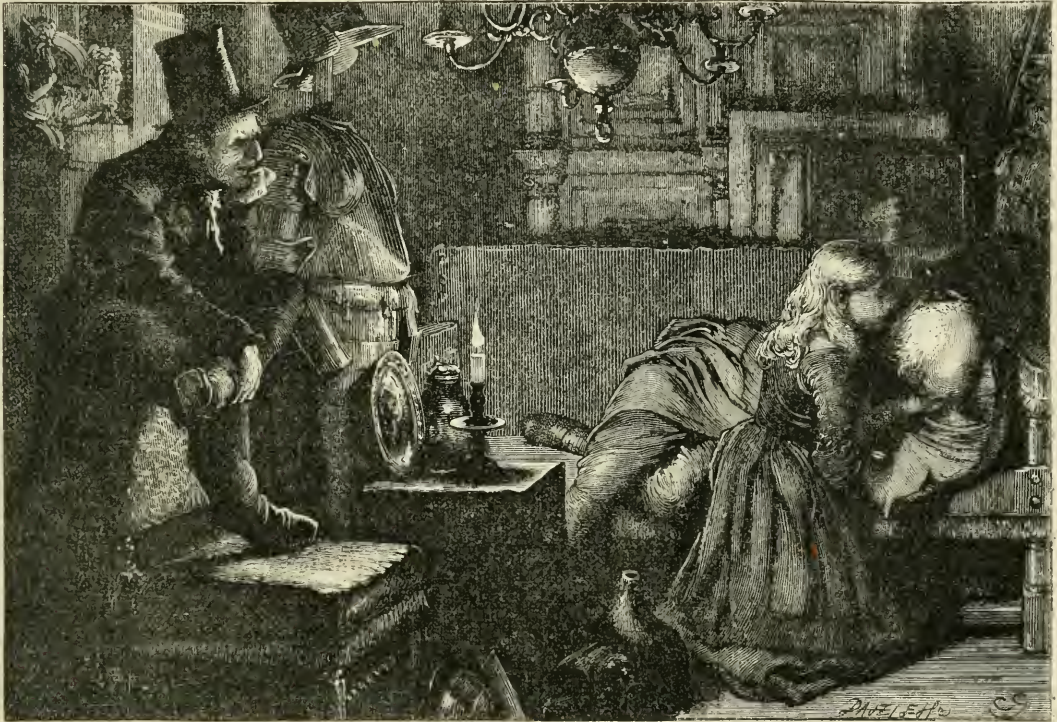
The old man looked up trembling.

"You are surprised," said Quilp. "Well, perhaps that's natural. You have no secret from me now, I say; no, not one. For now I know that all those sums of money, that all

those loans, advances, and supplies that you have had from me, have found their way to— Shall I say the word?"

"Ay!" replied the old man, "say it if you will."

"To the gaming-table," rejoined Quilp, "your nightly haunt. This was the precious scheme to make your fortune, was it; this was the secret certain source of wealth in which I was to have sunk my money (if I had been the fool you took me for); this was your inexhaustible mine of gold, your El Dorado, eh?"



"HE SOON CAST HIS EYES UPON A CHAIR, INTO WHICH HE SKIPPED WITH UNCOMMON AGILITY, AND, PERCHING HIMSELF ON THE BACK WITH HIS FEET UPON THE SEAT, WAS THUS ENABLED TO LOOK ON."

"Yes," cried the old man, turning upon him with gleaming eyes, "it was. It is. It will be till I die."

"That I should have been blinded," said Quilp, looking contemptuously at him, "by a mere shallow gambler!"

"I am no gambler," cried the old man fiercely. "I call Heaven to witness that I never played for gain of mine, or love of play; that, at every piece I staked, I whispered to myself that orphan's name, and called on Heaven to bless the venture;—which it never did. Whom did

it prosper? Who were those with whom I played? Men who lived by plunder, profligacy, and riot; squandering their gold in doing ill, and propagating vice and evil. My winnings would have been from them, my winnings would have been bestowed to the last farthing on a young sinless child whose life they would have sweetened and made happy. What would they have contracted? The means of corruption, wretchedness, and misery. Who would not have hoped in such a cause—tell me that? Who would not have hoped as I did?"

"When did you first begin this mad career?" asked Quilp, his taunting inclination subdued, for a moment, by the old man's grief and wildness.

"When did I first begin?" he rejoined, passing his hand across his brow. "When *was* it that I first began? When should it be, but when I began to think how little I had saved, how long a time it took to save at all, how short a time I might have at my age to live, and how she would be left to the rough mercies of the world, with barely enough to keep her from the sorrows that wait on poverty? Then it was that I began to think about it."

"After you first came to me to get your precious grandson packed off to sea?" said Quilp.

"Shortly after that," replied the old man. "I thought of it a long time, and had it in my sleep for months. Then I began. I found no pleasure in it, I expected none. What has it ever brought to me but anxious days and sleepless nights; but loss of health and peace of mind, and gain of feebleness and sorrow?"

"You lost what money you had laid by, first, and then came to me. While I thought you were making your fortune (as you said you were), you were making yourself a beggar, eh? Dear me! And so it comes to pass that I hold every security you could scrape together, and a bill of sale upon the—upon the stock and property," said Quilp, standing up and looking about him, as if to assure himself that none of it had been taken away. "But did you never win?"

"Never!" groaned the old man. "Never won back my loss!"

"I thought," sneered the dwarf, "that if a man played long enough he was sure to win at last, or, at the worst, not to come off a loser."

"And so he is," cried the old man, suddenly rousing himself from his state of despondency, and lashed into the most violent excitement, "so he is; I have felt that from the first, I have always known it, I've seen it, I never felt it half so strongly as I feel it now. Quilp, I have dreamed, three nights, of winning the same large sum. I never could dream that dream before, though I have often tried. Do not desert me, now I have this chance. I have no resource but you, give me some help, let me try this one last hope."

The dwarf shrugged his shoulders and shook his head.

"See, Quilp, good tender-hearted Quilp," said the old man, drawing some scraps of paper from his pocket with a trembling hand, and clasping the dwarf's arm, "only see here. Look at these figures, the result of long calculation, and painful

and hard experience. I *must* win. I only want a little help once more, a few pounds, but two score pounds, dear Quilp."

"The last advance was seventy," said the dwarf, "and it went in one night."

"I know it did," answered the old man, "but that was the very worst fortune of all, and the time had not come then. Quilp, consider, consider," the old man cried, trembling so much the while, that the papers in his hand fluttered as if they were shaken by the wind, "that orphan child! If I were alone, I could die with gladness—perhaps even anticipate that doom which is dealt out so unequally: coming, as it does, on the proud and happy in their strength, and shunning the needy and afflicted, and all who court it in their despair—but what I have done has been for her. Help me for her sake, I implore you—not for mine, for hers!"

"I'm sorry I've got an appointment in the City," said Quilp, looking at his watch with perfect self-possession, "or I should have been very glad to have spent half an hour with you while you composed yourself—very glad."

"Nay, Quilp, good Quilp," gasped the old man, catching at his skirts—"you and I have talked together, more than once, of her poor mother's story. The fear of her coming to poverty has perhaps been bred in me by that. Do not be hard upon me, but take that into account. You are a great gainer by me. Oh, spare me the money for this one last hope!"

"I couldn't do it really," said Quilp with unusual politeness, "though I tell you what—and this is a circumstance worth bearing in mind, as showing how the sharpest among us may be taken in sometimes—I was so deceived by the penurious way in which you lived, alone with Nelly——"

"All done to save money for tempting fortune, and to make her triumph greater," cried the old man.

"Yes, yes, I understand that now," said Quilp: "but I was going to say, I was so deceived by that, your miserly way, the reputation you had among those who knew you of being rich, and your repeated assurances that you would make of my advances treble and quadruple the interest you paid me, that I'd have advanced you, even now, what you want, on your simple note of hand, if I hadn't unexpectedly become acquainted with your secret way of life."

"Who is it," retorted the old man desperately, "that, notwithstanding all my caution, told you? Come. Let me know the name—the person."



The crafty dwarf, bethinking himself that his giving up the child would lead to the disclosure of the artifice he had employed, which, as nothing was to be gained by it, it was well to conceal, stopped short in his answer and said, "Now, who do you think?"

"It was Kit, it must have been the boy; he played the spy, and you tampered with him?" said the old man.

"How came you to think of him?" said the dwarf in a tone of great commiseration. "Yes, it was Kit. Poor Kit!"

So saying, he nodded in a friendly manner, and took his leave; stopping when he had passed the outer door a little distance, and grinning with extraordinary delight.

"Poor Kit!" muttered Quilp. "I think it was Kit who said I was an uglier dwarf than could be seen anywhere for a penny, wasn't it? Ha, ha, ha! Poor Kit!"

And with that he went his way, still chuckling as he went.

## CHAPTER X.

**D**ANIEL QUILP neither entered nor left the old man's house unobserved. In the shadow of an archway nearly opposite, leading to one of the many passages which diverged from the main street, there lingered one who, having taken up his position when the twilight first came on, still maintained it with undiminished patience, and leaning against the wall with the manner of a person who had a long time to wait, and, being well used to it, was quite resigned, scarcely changed his attitude for the hour together.

This patient loungee attracted little attention from any of those who passed, and bestowed as little upon them. His eyes were constantly directed towards one object; the window at which the child was accustomed to sit. If he withdrew them for a moment, it was only to glance at a clock in some neighbouring shop, and then to strain his sight once more in the old quarter with increased earnestness and attention.

It has been remarked that this personage evinced no weariness in his place of concealment; nor did he, long as his waiting was. But, as the time went on, he manifested some anxiety and surprise, glancing at the clock more frequently and at the window less hopefully than before. At length, the clock was hidden from his sight by some envious shutters, then the church steeples proclaimed eleven at night, then

the quarter past, and then the conviction seemed to obtrude itself on his mind that it was of no use tarrying there any longer.

That the conviction was an unwelcome one, and that he was by no means willing to yield to it, was apparent from his reluctance to quit the spot; from the tardy steps with which he often left it, still looking over his shoulder at the same window; and from the precipitation with which he as often returned, when a fancied noise or the changing and imperfect light induced him to suppose it had been softly raised. At length, he gave the matter up, as hopeless for that night, and suddenly breaking into a run as though to force himself away, scampered off at his utmost speed, nor once ventured to look behind him, lest he should be tempted back again.

Without relaxing his pace, or stopping to take breath, this mysterious individual dashed on through a great many alleys and narrow ways, until he at length arrived in a square paved court, when he subsided into a walk, and, making for a small house from the window of which a light was shining, lifted the latch of the door and passed in.

"Bless us!" cried a woman, turning sharply round, "who's that? Oh! It's you, Kit!"

"Yes, mother, it's me."

"Why, how tired you look, my dear!"

"Old master ain't gone out to-night," said Kit; "and so she hasn't been at the window at all." With which words, he sat down by the fire, and looked very mournful and discontented.

The room in which Kit sat himself down, in this condition, was an extremely poor and homely place, but with that air of comfort about it, nevertheless, which—or the spot must be a wretched one indeed—cleanliness and order can always impart in some degree. Late as the Dutch clock showed it to be, the poor woman was still hard at work at an ironing-table; a young child lay sleeping in a cradle near the fire; and another, a sturdy boy of two or three years old, very wide awake, with a very tight nightcap on his head, and a nightgown very much too small for him on his body, was sitting bolt upright in a clothes-basket, staring over the rim with his great round eyes, and looking as if he had thoroughly made up his mind never to go to sleep any more; which, as he had already declined to take his natural rest, and had been brought out of bed in consequence, opened a cheerful prospect for his relations and friends. It was rather a queer-looking family: Kit, his mother, and the children being all strongly alike.

Kit was disposed to be out of temper, as the best of us are too often—but he looked at the

youngest child who was sleeping soundly, and from him to his other brother in the clothes-basket, and from him to their mother, who had been at work without complaint since morning, and thought it would be a better and kinder thing to be good-humoured. So he rocked the cradle with his foot; made a face at the rebel in the clothes-basket, which put him in high good-humour directly; and stoutly determined to be talkative and make himself agreeable.

"Ah, mother!" said Kit, taking out his clasp-knife, and falling upon a great piece of bread and meat which she had had ready for him, hours before, "what a one you are! There an't many such as you, I know."

"I hope there are many a great deal better, Kit," said Mrs. Nubbles; "and that there are, or ought to be, accordin' to what the parson at chapel says."

"Much *he* knows about it," returned Kit contemptuously. "Wait till he's a widder and works like you do, and gets as little, and does as much, and keeps his spirits up the same, and then I'll ask him what's o'clock, and trust him for being right to half a second."

"Well," said Mrs. Nubbles, evading the point, "your beer's down there by the fender, Kit."

"I see," replied her son, taking up the porter pot; "my love to you, mother. And the parson's health too if you like. I don't bear him any malice, not I!"

"Did you tell me, just now, that your master hadn't gone out to-night?" inquired Mrs. Nubbles.

"Yes," said Kit, "worse luck."

"You should say better luck, I think," returned his mother, "because Miss Nelly won't have been left alone."

"Ah!" said Kit, "I forgot that. I said worse luck, because I've been watching ever since eight o'clock, and seen nothing of her."

"I wonder what she'd say," cried his mother, stopping in her work, and looking round, "if she knew that every night when she—poor thing—is sitting alone at that window, you are watching in the open street for fear any harm should come to her, and that you never leave the place nor come home to your bed, though you're ever so tired, till such time as you think she's safe in hers."

"Never mind what she'd say," replied Kit with something like a blush on his uncouth face; "she'll never know nothing, and consequently, she'll never say nothing."

Mrs. Nubbles ironed away in silence for a minute or two, and coming to the fire-place for

another iron, glanced stealthily at Kit while she rubbed it on a board and dusted it with a duster, but said nothing until she had returned to her table again: when, holding the iron at an alarmingly short distance from her cheek to test its temperature, and looking round with a smile, she observed:

"I know what some people would say, Kit—"

"Nonsense," interposed Kit, with a perfect apprehension of what was to follow.

"No, but they would indeed. Some people would say that you'd fallen in love with her, I know they would."

To this Kit only replied by bashfully bidding his mother "get out," and forming sundry strange figures with his legs and arms, accompanied by sympathetic contortions of his face. Not deriving from these means the relief which he sought, he bit off an immense mouthful from the bread and meat, and took a quick drink of the porter; by which artificial aids he choked himself, and effected a diversion of the subject.

"Speaking seriously, though, Kit," said his mother, taking up the theme afresh after a time, "for of course I was only in joke just now, it's very good and thoughtful, and like you, to do this, and never let anybody know it, though some day I hope she may come to know it, for I'm sure she would be very grateful to you, and feel it very much. It's a cruel thing to keep the dear child shut up there. I don't wonder that the old gentleman wants to keep it from you."

"He don't think it's cruel, bless you," said Kit, "and don't mean it to be so, or he wouldn't do it—I do consider, mother, that he wouldn't do it for all the gold and silver in the world. No, no, that he wouldn't. I know him better than that."

"Then what does he do it for, and why does he keep it so close from you?" said Mrs. Nubbles.

"That I don't know," returned her son. "If he hadn't tried to keep it so close, though, I should never have found it out, for it was his getting me away at night, and sending me off so much earlier than he used to, that first made me curious to know what was going on. Hark! what's that?"

"It's only somebody outside."

"It's somebody crossing over here," said Kit, standing up to listen, "and coming very fast, too. He can't have gone out after I left, and the house caught fire, mother!"

The boy stood for a moment, really bereft, by the apprehension he had conjured up, of the power to move. The footsteps drew nearer, the door was opened with a hasty hand, and the



child herself, pale and breathless, and hastily wrapped in a few disordered garments, hurried into the room.

"Miss Nelly! What is the matter?" cried mother and son together.

"I must not stay a moment," she returned; "grandfather has been taken very ill. I found him in a fit upon the floor——"

"I'll run for a doctor," said Kit, seizing his brimless hat. "I'll be there directly, I'll——"

"No, no," cried Nell, "there is one there, you're not wanted, you—you—must never come near us any more!"

"What!" roared Kit.

"Never again," said the child. "Don't ask me why, for I don't know. Pray don't ask me why, pray don't be sorry, pray don't be vexed with me! I have nothing to do with it indeed!"

Kit looked at her with his eyes stretched wide; and opened and shut his mouth a great many times; but couldn't get out one word.

"He complains and raves of you," said the child. "I don't know what you have done, but I hope it's nothing very bad.

"I done?" roared Kit.

"He cries that you're the cause of all his misery," returned the child with tearful eyes; "he screamed and called for you; they say you must not come near him, or he will die. You must not return to us any more. I came to tell you. I thought it would be better that I should come than somebody quite strange. Oh, Kit, what *have* you done? you, in whom I trusted so much, and who were almost the only friend I had?"

The unfortunate Kit looked at his young mistress harder and harder, and with eyes growing wider and wider, but was perfectly motionless and silent.

"I have brought his money for the week," said the child, looking to the woman, and laying it on the table—"and—and—a little more, for he was always good and kind to me. I hope he will be sorry, and do well somewhere else, and not take this to heart too much. It grieves me very much to part with him like this, but there is no help. It must be done. Good night!"

With the tears streaming down her face, and her slight figure trembling with the agitation of the scene she had left, the shock she had received, the errand she had just discharged, and a thousand painful and affectionate feelings, the child hastened to the door, and disappeared as rapidly as she had come.

The poor woman, who had no cause to doubt her son, but every reason for relying on his

honesty and truth, was staggered, notwithstanding, by his not having advanced one word in his defence. Visions of gallantry, knavery, robbery; and of the nightly absences from home for which he had accounted so strangely, having been occasioned by some unlawful pursuit; flocked into her brain and rendered her afraid to question him. She rocked herself upon a chair, wringing her hands and weeping bitterly, but Kit made no attempt to comfort her, and remained quite bewildered. The baby in the cradle woke up and cried; the boy in the clothes-basket fell over on his back with the basket upon him, and was seen no more; the mother wept louder yet, and rocked faster; but Kit, insensible to all the din and tumult, remained in a state of utter stupefaction.

## CHAPTER XI.

QUIET and solitude were destined to hold uninterrupted rule no longer beneath the roof that sheltered the child. Next morning, the old man was in a raging fever accompanied with delirium; and sinking under the influence of this disorder, he lay for many weeks in imminent peril of his life. There was watching enough now, but it was the watching of strangers who made a greedy trade of it, and who, in the intervals of their attendance upon the sick man, huddled together with a ghastly good-fellowship, and ate and drank and made merry; for disease and death were their ordinary household gods.

Yet, in all the hurry and crowding of such a time, the child was more alone than she had ever been before; alone in spirit, alone in her devotion to him who was wasting away upon his burning bed; alone in her unfeigned sorrow and her unpurchased sympathy. Day after day, and night after night, found her still by the pillow of the unconscious sufferer, still anticipating his every want, still listening to those repetitions of her name and those anxieties and cares for her, which were ever uppermost among his feverish wanderings.

The house was no longer theirs. Even the sick chamber seemed to be retained on the uncertain tenure of Mr. Quilp's favour. The old man's illness had not lasted many days when he took formal possession of the premises, and all upon them, in virtue of certain legal powers to that effect, which few understood and none presumed to call in question. This important step

secured, with the assistance of a man of law whom he brought with him for the purpose, the dwarf proceeded to establish himself and his coadjutor in the house, as an assertion of his claim against all comers; and then set about making his quarters comfortable, after his own fashion.

To this end, Mr. Quilp encamped in the back-parlour, having first put an effectual stop to any further business by shutting up the shop. Having looked out, from among the old furniture, the handsomest and most commodious chair he could possibly find (which he reserved for his own use), and an especially hideous and uncomfortable one (which he considerably appropriated to the accommodation of his friend), he caused them to be carried into this room, and took up his position in great state. The apartment was very far removed from the old man's chamber, but Mr. Quilp deemed it prudent, as a precaution against infection from fever, and a means of wholesome fumigation, not only to smoke himself, without cessation, but to insist upon it that his legal friend did the like. Moreover, he sent an express to the wharf for the tumbling boy, who, arriving with all dispatch, was enjoined to sit himself down in another chair just inside the door, continually to smoke a great pipe which the dwarf had provided for the purpose, and to take it from his lips under any pretence whatever, were it only for one minute at a time, if he dared. These arrangements completed, Mr. Quilp looked round him with chuckling satisfaction, and remarked that he called that comfort.

The legal gentleman, whose melodious name was Brass, might have called it comfort also, but for two drawbacks: one was, that he could by no exertion sit easy in his chair, the seat of which was very hard, angular, slippery, and sloping; the other, that tobacco smoke always caused him great internal discomposure and annoyance. But as he was quite a creature of Mr. Quilp's, and had a thousand reasons for conciliating his good opinion, he tried to smile, and nodded his acquiescence with the best grace he could assume.

This Brass was an attorney of no very good repute, from Bevis Marks, in the city of London; he was a tall, meagre man, with a nose like a wen, a protruding forehead, retreating eyes, and hair of a deep red. He wore a long black surtout reaching nearly to his ankles, short black trousers, high shoes, and cotton stockings of a bluish grey. He had a cringing manner, but a very harsh voice; and his blindest smiles were so extremely forbidding, that to

have had his company under the least repulsive circumstances, one would have wished him to be out of temper that he might only scowl.

Quilp looked at his legal adviser, and seeing that he was winking very much in the anguish of his pipe, that he sometimes shuddered when he happened to inhale its full flavour, and that he constantly fanned the smoke from him, was quite overjoyed and rubbed his hands with glee.

"Smoke away, you dog," said Quilp, turning to the boy; "fill your pipe again and smoke it fast, down to the last whiff, or I'll put the sealing-waxed end of it in the fire, and rub it red-hot upon your tongue."

Luckily the boy was case-hardened, and would have smoked a small lime-kiln if anybody had treated him with it. Wherefore, he only muttered a brief defiance of his master, and did as he was ordered.

"Is it good, Brass, is it nice, is it fragrant, do you feel like the Grand Turk?" said Quilp.

Mr. Brass thought that, if he did, the Grand Turk's feelings were by no means to be envied, but he said it was famous, and he had no doubt he felt very like that Potentate.

"This is the way to keep off fever," said Quilp, "this is the way to keep off every calamity of life! We'll never leave off, all the time we stop here. Smoke away, you dog, or you shall swallow the pipe!"

"Shall we stop here long, Mr. Quilp?" inquired his legal friend, when the dwarf had given his boy this gentle admonition.

"We must stop, I suppose, till the old gentleman up-stairs is dead," returned Quilp.

"He, he, he!" laughed Brass. "Oh, very good!"

"Smoke away!" cried Quilp. "Never stop! You can talk as you smoke. Don't lose time."

"He, he, he!" cried Brass faintly, as he again applied himself to the odious pipe. "But if he should get better, Mr. Quilp?"

"Then we shall stop till he does, and no longer," returned the dwarf.

"How kind it is of you, sir, to wait till then!" said Brass. "Some people, sir, would have sold or removed the goods—oh dear! the very instant the law allowed 'em. Some people, sir, would have been all flintiness and granite. Some people, sir, would have——"

"Some people would have spared themselves the jabbering of such a parrot as you," interposed the dwarf.

"He, he, he!" cried Brass. "You have such spirits!"

The smoking sentinel at the door interposed



in this place, and without taking his pipe from his lips, growled :

"Here's the gal a-coming down."

"The what, you dog?" said Quilp.

"The gal," returned the boy. "Are you deaf?"

"Oh!" said Quilp, drawing in his breath with great relish as if he were taking soup, "you and I will have such a settling presently; there's such a scratching and bruising in store for you, my dear young friend! Aha! Nelly! How is he now, my duck of diamonds?"

"He's very bad," replied the weeping child.

"What a pretty little Nell!" cried Quilp.

"Oh, beautiful, sir, beautiful indeed!" said Brass. "Quite charming!"

"Has she come to sit upon Quilp's knee," said the dwarf in what he meant to be a soothing tone, "or is she going to bed in her own little room inside here—which is poor Nelly going to do?"

"What a remarkable pleasant way he has with children!" muttered Brass, as if in confidence between himself and the ceiling; "upon my word it's quite a treat to hear him."

"I'm not going to stay at all," faltered Nell. "I want a few things out of that room, and then I—I—won't come down here any more."

"And a very nice little room it is!" said the dwarf, looking into it as the child entered. "Quite a bower! You're sure you're not going to use it; you're sure you're not coming back, Nelly?"

"No," replied the child, hurrying away with the few articles of dress she had come to remove; "never again! Never again."

"She's very sensitive," said Quilp, looking after her. "Very sensitive; that's a pity. The bedstead is much about my size. I think I shall make it my little room."

Mr. Brass encouraging this idea, as he would have encouraged any other emanating from the same source, the dwarf walked in to try the effect. This he did, by throwing himself on his back upon the bed with his pipe in his mouth, and then kicking up his legs and smoking violently. Mr. Brass applauding this picture very much, and the bed being soft and comfortable, Mr. Quilp determined to use it, both as a sleeping-place by night and as a kind of Divan by day; and in order that it might be converted to the latter purpose at once, remained where he was, and smoked his pipe out. The legal gentleman, being by this time rather giddy and perplexed in his ideas (for this was one of the operations of the tobacco on his nervous system), took the opportunity of slinking away into the

open air, where, in course of time, he recovered sufficiently to return with a countenance of tolerable composure. He was soon led on by the malicious dwarf to smoke himself into a relapse, and in that state stumbled upon a settee, where he slept till morning.

Such were Mr. Quilp's first proceedings on entering upon his new property. He was, for some days, restrained by business from performing any particular pranks, as his time was pretty well occupied between taking, with the assistance of Mr. Brass, a minute inventory of all the goods in the place, and going abroad upon his other concerns, which happily engaged him for several hours at a time. His avarice and caution being now thoroughly awakened, however, he was never absent from the house one night; and his eagerness for some termination, good or bad, to the old man's disorder, increasing rapidly as the time passed by, soon began to vent itself in open murmurs and exclamations of impatience.

Nell shrunk timidly from all the dwarf's advances towards conversation, and fled from the very sound of his voice; nor were the lawyer's smiles less terrible to her than Quilp's grimaces. She lived in such continual dread and apprehension of meeting one or other of them on the stairs or in the passages, if she stirred from her grandfather's chamber, that she seldom left it, for a moment, until late at night, when the silence encouraged her to venture forth and breathe the purer air of some empty room.

One night she had stolen to her usual window, and was sitting there very sorrowfully—for the old man had been worse that day—when she thought she heard her name pronounced by a voice in the street. Looking down, she recognised Kit, whose endeavours to attract her attention had roused her from her sad reflections.

"Miss Nell!" said the boy in a low voice.

"Yes," replied the child, doubtful whether she ought to hold any communication with the supposed culprit, but inclining to her old favourite still; "what do you want?"

"I have wanted to say a word to you for a long time," the boy replied, "but the people below have driven me away, and wouldn't let me see you. You don't believe—I hope you don't really believe—that I deserve to be cast off as I have been; do you, miss?"

"I must believe it," returned the child. "Or why would grandfather have been so angry with you?"

"I don't know," replied Kit. "I'm sure I've never deserved it from him, no, nor from you."

I can say that with a true and honest heart, anyway. And then to be driven from the door, when I only came to ask how old master was!"

"They never told me that," said the child. "I didn't know it indeed. I wouldn't have had them do it for the world."

"Thankee, miss," returned Kit; "it's comfortable to hear you say that. I said I never would believe that it was your doing."

"That was right!" said the child eagerly.

"Miss Nell," cried the boy, coming under the window, and speaking in a lower tone, "there are new masters down-stairs. It's a change for you."

"It is indeed," replied the child.

"And so it will be for him when he gets better," said the boy, pointing towards the sick-room.

"If he ever does," added the child, unable to restrain her tears.

"Oh! he'll do that, he'll do that," said Kit,



"IS IT GOOD, BRASS, IS IT NICE, IS IT FRAGRANT?"

"I'm sure he will. You mustn't be cast down, Miss Nell. Now don't be, pray!"

These words of encouragement and consolation were few and roughly said, but they affected the child, and made her, for the moment, weep the more.

"He'll be sure to get better now," said the boy anxiously, "if you don't give way to low spirits, and turn ill yourself, which would make him worse and throw him back, just as he was

recovering. When he does, say a good word—say a kind word for me, Miss Nell!"

"They tell me I must not even mention your name to him for a long, long time," rejoined the child. "I dare not; and even if I might, what good would a kind word do you, Kit? We shall be very poor. We shall scarcely have bread to eat."

"It's not that I may be taken back," said the boy, "that I ask the favour of you. It isn't for



the sake of food and wages that I've been waiting about so long, in hopes to see you. Don't think that I'd come in a time of trouble to talk of such things as them."

The child looked gratefully and kindly at him, but waited that he might speak again.

"No, it's not that," said Kit, hesitating; "it's something very different from that. I haven't got much sense, I know; but if he could be brought to believe that I'd been a faithful servant to him, doing the best I could, and never meaning harm, perhaps he mightn't——"

Here Kit faltered so long that the child entreated him to speak out, and quickly, for it was very late, and time to shut the window.

"Perhaps he mightn't think it over-venturesome of me to say—well, then, to say this," cried Kit with sudden boldness. "This home is gone from you and him. Mother and I have got a poor one, but that's better than this with all these people here; and why not come there till he's had time to look about, and find a better?"

The child did not speak. Kit, in the relief of having made his proposition, found his tongue loosened, and spoke out in its favour with his utmost eloquence.

"You think," said the boy, "that it's very small and inconvenient. So it is, but it's very clean. Perhaps you think it would be noisy, but there's not a quieter court than ours in all the town. Don't be afraid of the children; the baby hardly ever cries, and the other one is very good—besides, I'd mind 'em. They wouldn't vex you much, I'm sure. Do try, Miss Nell, do try. The little front room up-stairs is very pleasant. You can see a piece of the church clock through the chimneys, and almost tell the time; mother says it would be just the thing for you, and so it would, and you'd have her to wait upon you both, and me to run of errands. We don't mean money, bless you; you're not to think of that! Will you try him, Miss Nell? Only say you'll try him. Do try to make old master come, and ask him first what I have done—will you only promise that, Miss Nell?"

Before the child could reply to this earnest solicitation, the street-door opened, and Mr. Brass, thrusting out his nightcapped head, called, in a surly voice, "Who's there?" Kit immediately glided away, and Nell, closing the window softly, drew back into the room.

Before Mr. Brass had repeated his inquiry many times, Mr. Quilp, also embellished with a nightcap, emerged from the same door, and looked carefully up and down the street, and up at all the windows of the house, from the oppo-

site side. Finding that there was nobody in sight, he presently returned into the house with his legal friend, protesting (as the child heard from the staircase) that there was a league and plot against him; that he was in danger of being robbed and plundered by a band of conspirators who prowled about the house at all seasons; and that he would delay no longer, but take immediate steps for disposing of the property and returning to his own peaceful roof. Having growled forth these, and a great many other threats of the same nature, he coiled himself once more into the child's little bed, and Nell crept softly up the stairs.

It was natural enough that her short and unfinished dialogue with Kit should leave a strong impression on her mind, and influence her dreams that night and her recollections for a long, long time. Surrounded by unfeeling creditors, and mercenary attendants upon the sick, and meeting in the height of her anxiety and sorrow with little regard or sympathy even from the women about her, it is not surprising that the affectionate heart of the child should have been touched to the quick by one kind and generous spirit, however uncouth the temple in which it dwelt. Thank Heaven that the temples of such spirits are not made with hands, and that they may be even more worthily hung with poor patchwork than with purple and fine linen!

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## CHAPTER XII.

**A**T length, the crisis of the old man's disorder was past, and he began to mend. By very slow and feeble degrees his consciousness came back; but the mind was weakened, and its functions were impaired. He was patient and quiet; often sat brooding, but not despondently, for a long space; was easily amused, even by a sunbeam on the wall or ceiling; made no complaint that the days were long, or the nights tedious; and appeared indeed to have lost all count of time, and every sense of care or weariness. He would sit, for hours together, with Nell's small hand in his, playing with the fingers, and stopping sometimes to smooth her hair or kiss her brow; and, when he saw that tears were glistening in her eyes, would look, amazed, about him for the cause, and forget his wonder even while he looked.

The child and he rode out: the old man propped up with pillows, and the child beside

him. They were hand-in-hand as usual. The noise and motion in the streets fatigued his brain at first, but he was not surprised, or curious, or pleased, or irritated. He was asked if he remembered this or that. "Oh yes," he said, "quite well—why not?" Sometimes he turned his head, and looked, with earnest gaze and outstretched neck, after some stranger in the crowd, until he disappeared from sight; but, to the question why he did this, he answered not a word.

He was sitting in his easy-chair one day, and Nell upon a stool beside him, when a man outside the door inquired if he might enter. "Yes," he said without emotion, "it was Quilp, he knew. Quilp was master there. Of course he might come in." And so he did.

"I'm glad to see you well again at last, neighbour," said the dwarf, sitting down opposite to him. "You're quite strong now?"

"Yes," said the old man feebly, "yes."

"I don't want to hurry you, you know, neighbour," said the dwarf, raising his voice, for the old man's senses were duller than they had been; "but as soon as you *can* arrange your future proceedings, the better."

"Surely," said the old man. "The better for all parties."

"You see," pursued Quilp after a short pause, "the goods being once removed, this house would be uncomfortable; uninhabitable, in fact."

"You say true," returned the old man. "Poor Nell, too, what would *she* do?"

"Exactly," bawled the dwarf, nodding his head; "that's very well observed. Then will you consider about it, neighbour?"

"I will, certainly," replied the old man. "We shall not stop here."

"So I supposed," said the dwarf. "I have sold the things. They have not yielded quite as much as they might have done, but pretty well—pretty well. To-day's Tuesday. When shall they be moved? There's no hurry—shall we say this afternoon?"

"Say Friday morning," returned the old man.

"Very good," said the dwarf. "So be it,—with the understanding that I can't go beyond that day, neighbour, on any account."

"Good," returned the old man. "I shall remember it."

Mr. Quilp seemed rather puzzled by the strange, even, spiritless way in which all this was said; but, as the old man nodded his head and repeated "on Friday morning: I shall remember it," he had no excuse for dwelling on the subject any further, and so took a friendly

leave, with many expressions of good-will and many compliments to his friend on his looking so remarkably well; and went below-stairs to report progress to Mr. Brass.

All that day, and all the next, the old man remained in this state. He wandered up and down the house, and into and out of the various rooms, as if with some vague intent of bidding them adieu, but he referred neither by direct allusions nor in any other manner to the interview of the morning, or the necessity of finding some other shelter. An indistinct idea he had that the child was desolate and in want of help; for he often drew her to his bosom, and bade her be of good cheer, saying that they would not desert each other; but he seemed unable to contemplate their real position more distinctly, and was still the listless, passionless creature that suffering of mind and body had left him.

We call this a state of childishness, but it is the same poor hollow mockery of it that death is of sleep. Where, in the dull eyes of dotting men, are the laughing light and life of childhood, the gaiety that has known no check, the frankness that has felt no chill, the hope that has never withered, the joys that fade in blossoming? Where, in the sharp lineaments of rigid and unsightly death, is the calm beauty of slumber, telling of rest for the waking hours that are past, and gentle hopes and loves for those which are to come? Lay death and sleep down side by side, and say who shall find the two akin? Send forth the child and childish man together, and blush for the pride that libels our own old happy state, and gives its title to an ugly and distorted image.

Thursday arrived, and there was no alteration in the old man. But, a change came upon him that evening, as he and the child sat silently together.

In a small dull yard below his window there was a tree—green and flourishing enough, for such a place—and as the air stirred among its leaves, it threw a rippling shadow on the white wall. The old man sat watching the shadows as they trembled in this patch of light, until the sun went down; and when it was night, and the moon was slowly rising, he still sat in the same spot.

To one who had been tossing on a restless bed so long, even these few green leaves and this tranquil light, although it languished among chimneys and housetops, were pleasant things. They suggested quiet places afar off, and rest, and peace.

The child thought, more than once, that he was moved: and had forborne to speak. But,



now, he shed tears—tears that it lightened her aching heart to see—and making as though he would fall upon his knees, besought her to forgive him.

“Forgive you—what?” said Nell, interposing to prevent his purpose. “Oh, grandfather, what should I forgive?”

“All that is past, all that has come upon thee, Nell, all that was done in that uneasy dream,” returned the old man.

“Do not talk so,” said the child. “Pray do not. Let us speak of something else.”

“Yes, yes, we will,” he rejoined. “And it shall be of what we talked of long ago—many months—months is it, or weeks, or days? Which is it, Nell?”

“I do not understand you,” said the child.

“It has come back upon me to-day, it has all come back since we have been sitting here. I bless thee for it, Nell!”

“For what, dear grandfather?”

“For what you said when we were first made beggars, Nell. Let us speak softly. Hush! for, if they knew our purpose down-stairs, they would cry that I was mad, and take thee from me. We will not stop here another day. We will go far away from here.”

“Yes, let us go,” said the child earnestly. “Let us begone from this place, and never turn back or think of it again. Let us wander bare-foot through the world, rather than linger here.”

“We will,” answered the old man, “we will travel afoot through the fields and woods, and by the side of rivers, and trust ourselves to God in the places where He dwells. It is far better to lie down at night beneath an open sky like that yonder—see how bright it is!—than to rest in close rooms which are always full of care and weary dreams. Thou and I together, Nell, may be cheerful and happy yet, and learn to forget this time, as if it had never been.”

“We will be happy,” cried the child. “We never can be here.”

“No, we never can again—never again—that’s truly said,” rejoined the old man. “Let us steal away to-morrow morning—early and softly, that we may not be seen or heard—and leave no trace or track for them to follow by. Poor Nell! Thy cheek is pale, and thy eyes are heavy with watching and weeping—with watching and weeping for me—I know—for me; but thou wilt be well again, and merry too, when we are far away. To-morrow morning, dear, we’ll turn our faces from this scene of sorrow, and be as free and happy as the birds.”

And then the old man clasped his hands above her head, and said, in a few broken words,

that from that time forth they would wander up and down together, and never part more until Death took one or other of the twain.

The child’s heart beat high with hope and confidence. She had no thought of hunger, or cold, or thirst, or suffering. She saw in this but a return of the simple pleasures they had once enjoyed, a relief from the gloomy solitude in which she had lived, an escape from the heartless people by whom she had been surrounded in her late time of trial, the restoration of the old man’s health and peace, and a life of tranquil happiness. Sun and stream, and meadow and summer days, shone brightly in her view, and there was no dark tint in all the sparkling picture.

The old man had slept, for some hours, soundly in his bed, and she was yet busily engaged in preparing for their flight. There were a few articles of clothing for herself to carry, and a few for him; old garments, such as became their fallen fortunes, laid out to wear; and a staff to support his feeble steps, put ready for his use. But this was not all her task; for now she must visit the old rooms for the last time.

And how different the parting with them was from any she had expected, and most of all from that which she had oftenest pictured to herself! How could she ever have thought of bidding them farewell in triumph, when the recollection of the many hours she had passed among them rose to her swelling heart, and made her feel the wish a cruelty: lonely and sad though many of those hours had been? She sat down at the window where she had spent so many evenings—darker far than this—and every thought of hope or cheerfulness that had occurred to her in that place came vividly upon her mind, and blotted out all its dull and mournful associations in an instant.

Her own little room, too, where she had so often knelt down and prayed at night—prayed for the time which she hoped was dawning now—the little room where she had slept so peacefully, and dreamed such pleasant dreams—it was hard not to be able to glance round it once more, and to be forced to leave it without one kind look or grateful tear. There were some trifles there—poor useless things—that she would have liked to take away; but that was impossible.

This brought to her mind her bird, her poor bird, who hung there yet. She wept bitterly for the loss of this little creature—until the idea occurred to her—she did not know how, or why, it came into her head—that it might, by some means, fall into the hands of Kit, who would keep it for her sake, and think, perhaps, that

she had left it behind in the hope that he might have it, and as an assurance that she was grateful to him. She was calmed and comforted by the thought, and went to rest with a lighter heart.

From many dreams of rambling through light and sunny places, but with some vague object unattained which ran indistinctly through them all, she awoke to find that it was yet night, and that the stars were shining brightly in the sky. At length the day began to glimmer, and the stars to grow pale and dim. As soon as she was sure of this she arose, and dressed herself for the journey.

The old man was yet asleep, and as she was unwilling to disturb him, she left him to slumber on until the sun rose. He was anxious that they should leave the house without a minute's loss of time, and was soon ready.

The child then took him by the hand, and they trod lightly and cautiously down the stairs, trembling whenever a board creaked, and often stopping to listen. The old man had forgotten a kind of wallet which contained the light burden he had to carry; and the going back a few steps to fetch it seemed an interminable delay.

At last they reached the passage on the ground-floor, where the snoring of Mr. Quilp and his legal friend sounded more terrible in their ears than the roars of lions. The bolts of the door were rusty, and difficult to unfasten without noise. When they were all drawn back, it was found to be locked, and, worst of all, the key was gone. Then the child remembered, for the first time, one of the nurses having told her that Quilp always locked both the house-doors at night, and kept the keys on the table in his bedroom.

It was not without great fear and trepidation that little Nell slipped off her shoes, and gliding through the store-room of old curiosities, where Mr. Brass—the ugliest piece of goods in all the stock—lay sleeping on a mattress, passed into her own little chamber.

Here she stood, for a few moments, quite transfixed with terror at the sight of Mr. Quilp, who was hanging so far out of bed that he almost seemed to be standing on his head, and who, either from the uncasiness of his posture, or in one of his agreeable habits, was gasping and growling with his mouth wide open, and the whites (or rather the dirty yellows) of his eyes distinctly visible. It was no time, however, to ask whether anything ailed him; so, possessing herself of the key after one hasty glance about the room, and repassing the prostrate Mr. Brass, she rejoined the old man in safety. They got

the door open without noise, and passing into the street, stood still.

"Which way?" said the child.

The old man looked, irresolutely and helplessly, first at her, then to the right and left, then at her again, and shook his head. It was plain that she was thenceforth his guide and leader. The child felt it, but had no doubts or misgiving, and putting her hand in his, led him gently away.

It was the beginning of a day in June; the deep blue sky unsullied by a cloud, and teeming with brilliant light. The streets were, as yet, nearly free from passengers, the houses and shops were closed, and the healthy air of morning fell like breath from angels on the sleeping town.

The old man and the child passed on through the glad silence, elate with hope and pleasure. They were alone together, once again; every object was bright and fresh; nothing reminded them, otherwise than by contrast, of the monotony and constraint they had left behind; church towers and steeples, frowning and dark at other times, now shone and dazzled in the sun; each humble nook and corner rejoiced in light; and the sky, dimmed only by excessive distance, shed its placid smile on everything beneath.

Forth from the city, while it yet slumbered, went the two poor adventurers, wandering they knew not whither.

### CHAPTER XIII.



DANIEL QUILP of Tower Hill, and Sampson Brass of Bevis Marks, in the city of London, Gentleman, one of her Majesty's attorneys of the Courts of King's Bench and Common Pleas at Westminster and a solicitor of the High Court of Chancery, slumbered on, unconscious and unsuspecting of any mischance, until a knocking at the street-door, often repeated and gradually mounting up from a modest single rap to a perfect battery of knocks, fired in long discharges with a very short interval between, caused the said Daniel Quilp to struggle into a horizontal position, and to stare at the ceiling with a drowsy indifference, betokening that he heard the noise, and rather wondered at the same, but couldn't be at the trouble of bestowing any further thought upon the subject.

As the knocking, however, instead of accommodating itself to his lazy state, increased in vigour and became more importunate, as if in



earnest remonstrance against his falling asleep again, now that he had once opened his eyes, Daniel Quilp began by degrees to comprehend the possibility of there being somebody at the door; and thus he gradually came to recollect that it was Friday morning, and he had ordered Mrs. Quilp to be in waiting upon him at an early hour.

Mr. Brass, after writhing about in a great many strange attitudes, and often twisting his face and eyes into an expression like that which is usually produced by eating gooseberries very early in the season, was by this time awake also. Seeing that Mr. Quilp invested himself in his every-day garments, he hastened to do the like, putting on his shoes before his stockings, and thrusting his legs into his coat-sleeves, and making such other small mistakes in his toilet as are not uncommon to those who dress in a hurry, and labour under the agitation of having been suddenly roused.

While the attorney was thus engaged, the dwarf was groping under the table, muttering desperate imprecations on himself, and mankind in general, and all inanimate objects to boot, which suggested to Mr. Brass the question, "What's the matter?"

"The key," said the dwarf, looking viciously at him, "the door-key,—that's the matter. D'ye know anything of it?"

"How should I know anything of it, sir?" returned Mr. Brass.

"How should you?" repeated Quilp with a sneer. "You're a nice lawyer, an't you? Ugh, you idiot!"

Not caring to represent to the dwarf, in his present humour, that the loss of a key by another person could scarcely be said to affect his (Brass's) legal knowledge in any material degree, Mr. Brass humbly suggested that it must have been forgotten overnight, and was, doubtless, at that moment in its native keyhole. Notwithstanding that Mr. Quilp had a strong conviction to the contrary, founded on his recollection of having carefully taken it out, he was fain to admit that this was possible, and therefore went grumbling to the door, where, sure enough, he found it.

Now, just as Mr. Quilp laid his hand upon the lock, and saw with great astonishment that the fastenings were undone, the knocking came again with most irritating violence, and the daylight which had been shining through the keyhole was intercepted on the outside by a human eye. The dwarf was very much exasperated, and, wanting somebody to wreak his ill-humour upon, determined to dart out suddenly, and

favour Mrs. Quilp with a gentle acknowledgment of her attention in making that hideous uproar.

With this view, he drew back the lock very silently and softly, and, opening the door all at once, pounced out upon the person on the other side, who had at that moment raised the knocker for another application, and at whom the dwarf ran head first: throwing out his hands and feet together, and biting the air in the fulness of his malice.

So far, however, from rushing upon somebody who offered no resistance and implored his mercy, Mr. Quilp was no sooner in the arms of the individual whom he had taken for his wife than he found himself complimented with two staggering blows on the head, and two more, of the same quality, in the chest; and closing with his assailant, such a shower of buffets rained down upon his person as sufficed to convince him that he was in skilful and experienced hands. Nothing daunted by this reception, he clung tight to his opponent, and bit and hammered away with such good-will and heartiness, that it was at least a couple of minutes before he was dislodged. Then, and not until then, Daniel Quilp found himself, all flushed and dishevelled, in the middle of the street, with Mr. Richard Swiveller performing a kind of dance round him, and requiring to know "whether he wanted any more."

"There's plenty more of it at the same shop," said Mr. Swiveller, by turns advancing and retreating in a threatening attitude, "a large and extensive assortment always on hand—country orders executed with promptitude and dispatch—will you have a little more, sir?—don't say no, if you'd rather not."

"I thought it was somebody else," said Quilp, rubbing his shoulders. "Why didn't you say who you were?"

"Why didn't you say who *you* were," returned Dick, "instead of flying out of the house like a Bedlamite?"

"It was you that—that knocked," said the dwarf, getting up with a short groan, "was it?"

"Yes, I am the man," replied Dick. "That lady had begun when I came, but she knocked too soft, so I relieved her." As he said this, he pointed towards Mrs. Quilp, who stood trembling at a little distance.

"Humph!" muttered the dwarf, darting an angry look at his wife, "I thought it was your fault! And you, sir—don't you know there has been somebody ill here, that you knock as if you'd beat the door down?"

"Damme!" answered Dick, "that's why I

did it. I thought there was somebody dead here."

"You came for some purpose, I suppose," said Quilp. "What is it you want?"

"I want to know how the old gentleman is," rejoined Mr. Swiveller, "and to hear from Nell herself, with whom I should like to have a little talk. I'm a friend of the family, sir,—at least, I'm the friend of one of the family, and that's the same thing."

"You'd better walk in, then," said the dwarf. "Go on, sir, go on. Now, Mrs. Quilp—after you, ma'am."

Mrs. Quilp hesitated, but Mr. Quilp insisted. And it was not a contest of politeness, or by any means a matter of form, for she knew very well that her husband wished to enter the house in this order, that he might have a favourable opportunity of inflicting a few pinches on her arms, which were seldom free from impressions of his fingers in black and blue colours. Mr. Swiveller, who was not in the secret, was a little surprised to hear a suppressed scream, and, looking round, to see Mrs. Quilp following him with a sudden jerk; but he did not remark on these appearances, and soon forgot them.

"Now, Mrs. Quilp," said the dwarf when they had entered the shop, "go you up-stairs, if you please, to Nelly's room, and tell her that she's wanted."

"You seem to make yourself at home here," said Dick, who was unacquainted with Mr. Quilp's authority.

"I am at home, young gentleman," returned the dwarf.

Dick was pondering what these words might mean, and still more what the presence of Mr. Brass might mean, when Mrs. Quilp came hurrying down-stairs, declaring that the rooms above were empty.

"Empty, you fool!" said the dwarf.

"I give you my word, Quilp," answered his trembling wife, "that I have been into every room, and there's not a soul in any of them."

"And that," said Mr. Brass, clapping his hands once with an emphasis, "explains the mystery of the key!"

Quilp looked frowningly at him, and frowningly at his wife, and frowningly at Richard Swiveller; but, receiving no enlightenment from any of them, hurried up-stairs, whence he soon hurried down again, confirming the report which had been already made.

"It's a strange way of going," he said, glancing at Swiveller: "very strange not to communicate with me, who am such a close and intimate friend of his! Ah! he'll write to me, no doubt,

or he'll bid Nelly write—yes, yes, that's what he'll do. Nelly's very fond of me. Pretty Nell!"

Mr. Swiveller looked, as he was, all open-mouthed astonishment. Still glancing furtively at him, Quilp turned to Mr. Brass and observed, with assumed carelessness, that this need not interfere with the removal of the goods.

"For indeed," he added, "we knew that they'd go away to-day, but not that they'd go so early or so quietly. But they have their reasons, they have their reasons."

"Where in the devil's name are they gone?" said the wondering Dick.

Quilp shook his head and pursed up his lips in a manner which implied that he knew very well, but was not at liberty to say.

"And what," said Dick, looking at the confusion about him, "what do you mean by moving the goods?"

"That I have bought 'em, sir," rejoined Quilp. "Eh? What then?"

"Has the sly old fox made his fortune, then, and gone to live in a tranquil cot in a pleasant spot with a distant view of the changing sea?" said Dick in great bewilderment.

"Keeping his place of retirement very close, that he may not be visited too often by affectionate grandsons and their devoted friends, eh?" added the dwarf, rubbing his hands hard. "I say nothing, but is that your meaning?"

Richard Swiveller was utterly aghast at this unexpected alteration of circumstances, which threatened the complete overthrow of the project in which he bore so conspicuous a part, and seemed to nip his prospects in the bud. Having only received from Frederick Trent, late on the previous night, information of the old man's illness, he had come upon a visit of condolence and inquiry to Nell, prepared with the first instalment of that long train of fascinations which was to fire her heart at last. And here, when he had been thinking of all kinds of graceful and insinuating approaches, and meditating on the fearful retaliation which was slowly working against Sophy Wackles—here were Nell, the old man, and all the money gone, melted away, decamped he knew not whither, as if with a foreknowledge of the scheme and a resolution to defeat it in the very outset, before a step was taken.

In his secret heart, Daniel Quilp was both surprised and troubled by the flight which had been made. It had not escaped his keen eye that some indispensable articles of clothing were gone with the fugitives, and, knowing the old man's weak state of mind, he marvelled what that course of proceeding might be in which he



had so readily procured the concurrence of the child. It must not be supposed (or it would be a gross injustice to Mr. Quilp) that he was tortured by any disinterested anxiety on behalf of either. His uneasiness arose from a misgiving that the old man had some secret store of money which he had not suspected; and the bare idea of its escaping his clutches overwhelmed him with mortification and self-reproach.

In this frame of mind it was some consolation to him to find that Richard Swiveller was, for different reasons, evidently irritated and disappointed by the same cause. It was plain, thought the dwarf, that he had come there, on behalf of his friend, to cajole or frighten the old man out of some small fraction of that wealth of which they supposed him to have an abundance. Therefore, it was a relief to vex his heart with a picture of the riches the old man hoarded, and to expatiate on his cunning in removing himself even beyond the reach of importunity.

"Well," said Dick with a blank look, "I suppose it's of no use my staying here."

"Not the least in the world," rejoined the dwarf.

"You'll mention that I called, perhaps?" said Dick.

Mr. Quilp nodded, and said he certainly would, the very first time he saw them.

"And say," added Mr. Swiveller, "say, sir, that I was wafted here upon the pinions of concord; that I came to remove, with the rake of friendship, the seeds of mutual violence and heart-burning, and to sow in their place the germs of social harmony. Will you have the goodness to charge yourself with that commission, sir?"

"Certainly!" rejoined Quilp.

"Will you be kind enough to add to it, sir," said Dick, producing a very small limp card, "that *that* is my address, and that I am to be found at home every morning? Two distinct knocks, sir, will produce the slavey at any time. My particular friends, sir, are accustomed to sneeze when the door is opened, to give her to understand that they *are* my friends, and have no interested motives in asking if I'm at home. I beg your pardon; will you allow me to look at that card again?"

"Oh! by all means," rejoined Quilp.

"By a slight and not unnatural mistake, sir," said Dick, substituting another in its stead, "I had handed you the pass-ticket of a select convivial circle called the Glorious Apollers, of which I have the honour to be Perpetual Grand. *That* is the proper document, sir. Good morning."

Quilp bade him good day; the Perpetual Grand Master of the Glorious Apollers, elevating his hat in honour of Mrs. Quilp, dropped it carelessly on the side of his head again, and disappeared with a flourish.

By this time, certain vans had arrived for the conveyance of the goods, and divers strong men in caps were balancing chests of drawers and other trifles of that nature upon their heads, and performing muscular feats which heightened their complexions considerably. Not to be behindhand in the bustle, Mr. Quilp went to work with surprising vigour; hustling and driving the people about, like an evil spirit; setting Mrs. Quilp upon all kinds of arduous and impracticable tasks; carrying great weights up and down with no apparent effort; kicking the boy from the wharf whenever he could get near him; and inflicting, with his loads, a great many sly bumps and blows on the shoulders of Mr. Brass, as he stood upon the door-steps to answer all the inquiries of curious neighbours: which was his department. His presence and example diffused such alacrity among the persons employed, that, in a few hours, the house was emptied of everything but pieces of matting, empty porter pots, and scattered fragments of straw.

Seated, like an African chief, on one of these pieces of matting, the dwarf was regaling himself in the parlour, with bread and cheese and beer, when he observed, without appearing to do so, that a boy was prying in at the outer door. Assured that it was Kit, though he saw little more than his nose, Mr. Quilp hailed him by his name; whereupon Kit came in and demanded what he wanted.

"Come here, you sir," said the dwarf. "Well, so your old master and young mistress have gone?"

"Where?" rejoined Kit, looking round.

"Do you mean to say you don't know where?" answered Quilp sharply. "Where have they gone, eh?"

"I don't know," said Kit.

"Come," retorted Quilp, "let's have no more of this. Do you mean to say that you don't know they went away by stealth, as soon as it was light this morning?"

"No," said the boy in evident surprise.

"You don't know that?" cried Quilp. "Don't I know that you were hanging about the house the other night, like a thief, eh? Weren't you told then?"

"No," replied the boy.

"You were not?" said Quilp. "What were you told then; what were you talking about?"

Kit, who knew no particular reason why he

should keep the matter secret now, related the purpose for which he had come on that occasion, and the proposal he had made.

"Oh!" said the dwarf after a little consideration. "Then I think they'll come to you yet."

"Do you think they will?" cried Kit eagerly.

"Ay, I think they will," returned the dwarf. "Now, when they do, let me know; d'ye hear? Let me know, and I'll give you something. I

want to do 'em a kindness, and I can't do 'em a kindness unless I know where they are. You hear what I say?"

Kit might have returned some answer which would not have been agreeable to his irascible questioner, if the boy from the wharf, who had been skulking about the room in search of anything that might have been left about by accident, had not happened to cry, "Here's a bird! What's to be done with this?"



"NOT TO BE BEHINDHAND IN THE BUSTLE, MR. QUILP WENT TO WORK WITH SURPRISING VIGOUR."

"Wring its neck," rejoined Quilp.

"Oh no, don't do that!" said Kit, stepping forward. "Give it to me."

"Oh yes, I dare say!" cried the other boy. "Come! You let the cage alone, and let me wring its neck, will you? He said I was to do it. You let the cage alone, will you?"

"Give it here, give it to me, you dogs!" roared Quilp. "Fight for it, you dogs, or I'll wring its neck myself!"

Without further persuasion, the two boys fell

upon each other, tooth and nail, while Quilp, holding up the cage in one hand, and chopping the ground with his knife in an ecstasy, urged them on by his taunts and cries to fight more fiercely. They were a pretty equal match, and rolled about together, exchanging blows which were by no means child's play, until at length Kit, planting a well-directed hit in his adversary's chest, disengaged himself, sprung nimbly up, and, snatching the cage from Quilp's hands, made off with his prize.



He did not stop once until he reached home, where his bleeding face occasioned great consternation, and caused the elder child to howl dreadfully.

"Goodness gracious, Kit, what is the matter, what have you been doing?" cried Mrs. Nubbles.

"Never you mind, mother," answered her son, wiping his face on the jack-towel behind the door. "I'm not hurt, don't you be afraid for me. I've been a fightin' for a bird, and won him, that's all. Hold your noise, little Jacob. I never see such a naughty boy in all my days."

"You have been a fighting for a bird!" exclaimed his mother.

"Ah! Fightin' for a bird!" replied Kit, "and here he is—Miss Nelly's bird, mother, that they was a-goin' to wring the neck of! I stopped that, though. Ha, ha, ha! They wouldn't wring his neck, and me by, no, no. It wouldn't do, mother, it wouldn't do at all. Ha, ha, ha!"

Kit laughing so heartily, with his swollen and bruised face looking out of the towel, made little Jacob laugh, and then his mother laughed, and then the baby crowed and kicked with great glee, and then they all laughed in concert: partly because of Kit's triumph, and partly because they were very fond of each other. When this fit was over, Kit exhibited the bird to both children, as a great and precious rarity—it was only a poor linnet—and, looking about the wall for an old nail, made a scaffolding of a chair and table, and twisted it out with great exultation.

"Let me see," said the boy; "I think I'll hang him in the winder, because it's more light and cheerful, and he can see the sky there, if he looks up very much. He's such a one to sing, I can tell you!"

So, the scaffolding was made again, and Kit, climbing up with the poker for a hammer, knocked in the nail and hung up the cage, to the immeasurable delight of the whole family. When it had been adjusted and straightened a great many times, and he had walked backwards into the fire-place in his admiration of it, the arrangement was pronounced to be perfect.

"And now, mother," said the boy, "before I rest any more, I'll go out and see if I can find a horse to hold, and then I can buy some bird-seed, and a bit of something nice for you into the bargain."

## CHAPTER XIV.

AS it was very easy for Kit to persuade himself that the old house was in his way, his way being anywhere, he tried to look upon his passing it once more as a matter of imperative and disagreeable necessity, quite apart from any desire of his own, to which he could not choose but yield. It is not uncommon, for people who are much better fed and taught than Christopher Nubbles had ever been, to make duties of their inclinations in matters of more doubtful propriety, and to take great credit for the self-denial with which they gratify themselves.

There was no need of any caution this time, and no fear of being detained by having to play out a return match with Daniel Quilp's boy. The place was entirely deserted, and looked as dusty and dingy as if it had been so for months. A rusty padlock was fastened on the door, ends of discoloured blinds and curtains flapped drearily against the half-opened upper windows, and the crooked holes cut in the closed shutters below were black with the darkness of the inside. Some of the glass in the window he had so often watched had been broken in the rough hurry of the morning, and that room looked more deserted and dull than any. A group of idle urchins had taken possession of the door-steps; some were plying the knocker, and listening with delighted dread to the hollow sounds it spread through the dismantled house; others were clustered about the keyhole, watching, half in jest and half in earnest, for "the ghost," which an hour's gloom, added to the mystery that hung about the late inhabitants, had already raised. Standing all alone in the midst of the business and bustle of the street, the house looked a picture of cold desolation; and Kit, who remembered the cheerful fire that used to burn there on a winter's night, and the no less cheerful laugh that made the small room ring, turned quite mournfully away.

It must be especially observed, in justice to poor Kit, that he was by no means of a sentimental turn, and perhaps had never heard that adjective in all his life. He was only a soft-hearted, grateful fellow, and had nothing genteel or polite about him; consequently, instead of going home again, in his grief, to kick the children and abuse his mother (for, when your finely-strung people are out of sorts, they must have everybody else unhappy likewise), he turned his thoughts to the vulgar expedient of making them more comfortable if he could.

Bless us, what a number of gentlemen on horseback there were riding up and down, and how few of them wanted their horses held! A good City speculator or a parliamentary commissioner could have told to a fraction, from the crowds that were cantering about, what sum of money was realised in London, in the course of a year, by holding horses alone. And undoubtedly it would have been a very large one, if only a twentieth part of the gentlemen without grooms had had occasion to alight; but they had not; and it is often an ill-natured circumstance like this which spoils the most ingenious estimate in the world.

Kit walked about, now with quick steps and now with slow; now lingering as some rider slackened his horse's pace and looked about him; and now darting at full speed up a by-street as he caught a glimpse of some distant horseman going lazily up the shady side of the road, and promising to stop at every door. But on they all went, one after another, and there was not a penny stirring. "I wonder," thought the boy, "if one of these gentlemen knew there was nothing in the cupboard at home, whether he'd stop on purpose, and make believe that he wanted to call somewhere, that I might earn a trifle?"

He was quite tired out with pacing the streets, to say nothing of repeated disappointments, and was sitting down upon a step to rest, when there approached towards him a little clattering, jingling four-wheeled chaise, drawn by a little obstinate-looking rough-coated pony, and driven by a little fat placid-faced old gentleman. Beside the little old gentleman sat a little old lady, plump and placid like himself, and the pony was coming along at his own pace, and doing exactly as he pleased with the whole concern. If the old gentleman remonstrated by shaking the reins, the pony replied by shaking his head. It was plain that the utmost the pony would consent to do was to go in his own way up any street that the old gentleman particularly wished to traverse, but that it was an understanding between them that he must do this after his own fashion, or not at all.

As they passed where he sat, Kit looked so wistfully at the little turn-out, that the old gentleman looked at him. Kit rising and putting his hand to his hat, the old gentleman intimated to the pony that he wished to stop, to which proposal the pony (who seldom objected to that part of his duty) graciously acceded.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Kit. "I'm sorry you stopped, sir. I only meant did you want your horse minded?"

"I'm going to get down in the next street," returned the old gentleman. "If you like to come on after us, you may have the job."

Kit thanked him, and joyfully obeyed. The pony ran off at a sharp angle to inspect a lamp-post on the opposite side of the way, and then went off at a tangent to another lamp-post on the other side. Having satisfied himself that they were of the same pattern and materials, he came to a stop, apparently absorbed in meditation.

"Will you go on, sir," said the old gentleman gravely, "or are we to wait here for you till it's too late for our appointment?"

The pony remained immovable.

"Oh, you naughty Whisker!" said the old lady. "Fie upon you! I am ashamed of such conduct."

The pony appeared to be touched by this appeal to his feelings, for he trotted on directly, though in a sulky manner, and stopped no more until he came to a door whereon was a brass plate with the words "Witherden—Notary." Here the old gentleman got out and helped out the old lady, and then took from under the seat a nosegay resembling in shape and dimensions a full-sized warming-pan with the handle cut short off. This, the old lady carried into the house with a staid and stately air, and the old gentleman (who had a club-foot) followed close upon her.

They went, as it was easy to tell from the sound of their voices, into the front parlour, which seemed to be a kind of office. The day being very warm and the street a quiet one, the windows were wide open; and it was easy to hear through the Venetian blinds all that passed inside.

At first there was a great shaking of hands and shuffling of feet, succeeded by the presentation of the nosegay; for a voice, supposed by the listener to be that of Mr. Witherden, the notary, was heard to exclaim a great many times, "Oh, delicious!" "Oh, fragrant indeed!" and a nose, also supposed to be the property of that gentleman, was heard to inhale the scent with a snuffle of exceeding pleasure.

"I brought it in honour of the occasion, sir," said the old lady.

"Ah! an occasion indeed, ma'am; an occasion which does honour to me, ma'am, honour to me," rejoined Mr. Witherden, the notary. "I have had many a gentleman articted to me, ma'am, many a one. Some of them are now rolling in riches, unmindful of their old companion and friend, ma'am; others are in the habit of calling upon me to this day and saying,



‘Mr. Witherden, some of the pleasantest hours I ever spent in my life were spent in this office—were spent, sir, upon this very stool;’ but there was never one among the number, ma’am, attached as I have been to many of them, of whom I augured such bright things as I do of your only son.”

“Oh dear!” said the old lady. “How happy you do make us when you tell us that, to be sure!”

“I tell you, ma’am,” said Mr. Witherden, “what I think as an honest man, which, as the poet observes, is the noblest work of God. I agree with the poet in every particular, ma’am. The mountainous Alps on the one hand, or a humming-bird on the other, is nothing, in point of workmanship, to an honest man—or woman—or woman.”

“Anything that Mr. Witherden can say of me,” observed a small quiet voice, “I can say, with interest, of him, I am sure.”

“It’s a happy circumstance, a truly happy circumstance,” said the notary, “to happen too upon his eight-and-twentieth birthday, and I hope I know how to appreciate it. I trust, Mr. Garland, my dear sir, that we may mutually congratulate each other upon this auspicious occasion.”

To this the old gentleman replied that he felt assured they might. There appeared to be another shaking of hands in consequence, and, when it was over, the old gentleman said that, though he said it who should not, he believed no son had ever been a greater comfort to his parents than Abel Garland had been to his.

“Marrying, as his mother and I did, late in life, sir, after waiting for a great many years, until we were well enough off—coming together when we were no longer young, and then being blessed with one child who has always been dutiful and affectionate—why, it’s a source of great happiness to us both, sir.”

“Of course it is, I have no doubt of it,” returned the notary in a sympathising voice. “It’s the contemplation of this sort of thing that makes me deplore my fate in being a bachelor. There was a young lady once, sir, the daughter of an outfitting warehouse of the first respectability—but that’s a weakness. Chuckster, bring in Mr. Abel’s articles.”

“You see, Mr. Witherden,” said the old lady, “that Abel has not been brought up like the run of young men. He has always had a pleasure in our society, and always been with us. Abel has never been absent from us for a day; has he, my dear?”

“Never, my dear,” returned the old gentleman, “except when he went to Margate one Saturday with Mr. Tomkinley, that had been a

teacher at that school he went to, and came back upon the Monday; but he was very ill after that, you remember, my dear; it was quite a dissipation.”

“He was not used to it, you know,” said the old lady; “and he couldn’t bear it, that’s the truth. Besides, he had no comfort in being there without us, and had nobody to talk to or enjoy himself with.”

“That was it, you know,” interposed the same small quiet voice that had spoken once before. “I was quite abroad, mother, quite desolate, and to think that the sea was between us—oh, I never shall forget what I felt when I first thought that the sea was between us!”

“Very natural under the circumstances,” observed the notary. “Mr. Abel’s feelings did credit to his nature, and credit to your nature, ma’am, and his father’s nature, and human nature. I trace the same current now, flowing through all his quiet and unobtrusive proceedings.—I am about to sign my name, you observe, at the foot of the articles which Mr. Chuckster will witness; and placing my finger upon this blue wafer with the vandyked corners, I am constrained to remark in a distinct tone of voice—don’t be alarmed, ma’am, it is merely a form of law—that I deliver this as my act and deed. Mr. Abel will place his name against the other wafer, repeating the same cabalistic words, and the business is over. Ha, ha, ha! You see how easily these things are done!”

There was a short silence, apparently, while Mr. Abel went through the prescribed form, and then the shaking of hands and shuffling of feet were renewed, and shortly afterwards there was a clinking of wine-glasses and a great talkativeness on the part of everybody. In about a quarter of an hour Mr. Chuckster (with a pen behind his ear and his face inflamed with wine) appeared at the door, and, condescending to address Kit by the jocose appellation of “Young Snob,” informed him that the visitors were coming out.

Out they came forthwith; Mr. Witherden, who was short, chubby, fresh-coloured, brisk, and pompous, leading the old lady with extreme politeness, and the father and son following them, arm-in-arm. Mr. Abel, who had a quaint old-fashioned air about him, looked nearly of the same age as his father, and bore a wonderful resemblance to him in face and figure, though wanting something of his full, round cheerfulness, and substituting in its place a timid reserve. In all other respects, in the neatness of the dress, and even in the club-foot, he and the old gentleman were precisely alike.

Having seen the old lady safely in her seat, and assisted in the arrangement of her cloak and a small basket which formed an indispensable portion of her equipage, Mr. Abel got into a little box behind which had evidently been made for his express accommodation, and smiled at everybody present by turns, beginning with his mother and ending with the pony. There was then a great to-do to make the pony hold up his head, that the bearing-rein might be fastened; at last even this was effected; and the old gentleman, taking his seat and the reins, put his hands in his pocket to find a sixpence for Kit.

He had no sixpences, neither had the old lady, nor Mr. Abel, nor the notary, nor Mr. Chuckster. The old gentleman thought a shilling too much, but there was no shop in the street to get change at, so he gave it to the boy.

"There," he said jokingly, "I'm coming here again next Monday at the same time, and mind you're here, my lad, to work it out."

"Thank you, sir," said Kit. "I'll be sure to be here."

He was quite serious, but they all laughed heartily at his saying so, especially Mr. Chuckster, who roared outright, and appeared to relish the joke amazingly. As the pony, with a presentiment that he was going home, or a determination that he would not go anywhere else (which was the same thing), trotted away pretty nimbly, Kit had no time to justify himself, and went his way also. Having expended his treasure in such purchases as he knew would be most acceptable at home, not forgetting some seed for the wonderful bird, he hastened back as fast as he could, so elated with his success and great good fortune, that he more than half expected Nell and the old man would have arrived before him.

## CHAPTER XV.

**O**FTEN, while they were yet pacing the silent streets of the town on the morning of their departure, the child trembled with a mingled sensation of hope and fear as, in some far-off figure imperfectly seen in the clear distance, her fancy traced a likeness to honest Kit. But although she would gladly have given him her hand, and thanked him for what he had said at their last meeting, it was always a relief to find, when they came nearer to each other, that the person who approached was not he, but a stranger; for even

if she had not dreaded the effect which the sight of him might have wrought upon her fellow-traveller, she felt that to bid farewell to anybody now, and most of all to him who had been so faithful and so true, was more than she could bear. It was enough to leave dumb things behind, and objects that were insensible both to her love and sorrow. To have parted from her only other friend, upon the threshold of that wild journey, would have wrung her heart indeed.

Why is it that we can better bear to part in spirit than in body, and while we have the fortitude to act farewell have not the nerve to say it? On the eve of long voyages or an absence of many years, friends who are tenderly attached will separate with the usual look, the usual pressure of the hand, planning one final interview for the morrow, while each well knows that it is but a poor feint to save the pain of uttering that one word, and that the meeting will never be. Should possibilities be worse to bear than certainties? We do not shun our dying friends; the not having distinctly taken leave of one among them, whom we left in all kindness and affection, will often embitter the whole remainder of a life.

The town was glad with morning light; places that had shown ugly and distrustful all night long, now wore a smile; and sparkling sunbeams dancing on chamber windows, and twinkling through blind and curtain before sleepers' eyes, shed light even into dreams, and chased away the shadows of the night. Birds in hot rooms, covered up close and dark, felt it was morning, and chafed and grew restless in their little cells; bright-eyed mice crept back to their tiny homes and nestled timidly together; the sleek house-cat, forgetful of her prey, sat winking at the rays of sun starting through keyhole and cranny in the door, and longed for her stealthy run and warm sleek bask outside. The nobler beasts confined in dens stood motionless behind their bars, and gazed on fluttering boughs, and sunshine peeping through some little window, with eyes in which old forests gleamed—then trod impatiently the track their prisoned feet had worn—and stopped and gazed again. Men in their dungeons stretched their cramped cold limbs, and cursed the stone that no bright sky could warm. The flowers that sleep by night opened their gentle eyes and turned them to the day. The light, creation's mind, was everywhere, and all things owned its power.

The two pilgrims, often pressing each other's hands, or exchanging a smile or cheerful look, pursued their way in silence. Bright and happy



as it was, there was something solemn in the long deserted streets, from which, like bodies without souls, all habitual character and expression had departed, leaving but one dead uniform repose, that made them all alike. All was so still at that early hour, that the few pale people whom they met seemed as much unsuited to the scene as the sickly lamp which had been here and there left burning was powerless and faint in the full glory of the sun.

Before they had penetrated very far into the labyrinth of men's abodes which yet lay between them and the outskirts, this aspect began to melt away, and noise and bustle to usurp its place. Some straggling carts and coaches rumbling by, first broke the charm, then others came, then others yet more active, then a crowd. The wonder was, at first, to see a tradesman's room window open, but now it was a rare thing to see one closed; then, smoke rose slowly from the chimneys, and sashes were thrown up to let in air, and doors were opened, and servant-girls, looking lazily in all directions but their brooms, scattered brown clouds of dust into the eyes of shrinking passengers, or listened disconsolately to milkmen who spoke of country fairs, and told of waggons in the mews, with awnings and all things complete, and gallant swains to boot, which another hour would see upon their journey.

This quarter passed, they came upon the haunts of commerce and great traffic, where many people were resorting, and business was already rife. The old man looked about him with a startled and bewildered gaze, for these were places that he hoped to shun. He pressed his finger on his lip, and drew the child along by narrow courts and winding ways, nor did he seem at ease until they had left it far behind, often casting a backward look towards it, murmuring that ruin and self-murder were crouching in every street, and would follow if they scented them; and that they could not fly too fast.

Again this quarter passed, they came upon a straggling neighbourhood, where the mean houses parcelled off in rooms, and windows patched with rags and paper, told of the populous poverty that sheltered there. The shops sold goods that only poverty could buy, and sellers and buyers were pinched and griped alike. Here were poor streets where faded gentility essayed with scanty space and shipwrecked means to make its last feeble stand, but tax-gatherer and creditor came there as elsewhere, and the poverty that yet faintly struggled was hardly less squalid and manifest than that

which had long ago submitted and given up the game.

This was a wide, wide track—for the humble followers of the camp of wealth pitch their tents round about it for many a mile—but its character was still the same. Damp rotten houses, many to let, many yet building, many half built and mouldering away—lodgings where it would be hard to tell which needed pity most, those who let or those who came to take—children, scantily fed and clothed, spread over every street, and sprawling in the dust—scolding mothers stamping their slipshod feet with noisy threats upon the pavement—shabby fathers hurrying with dispirited looks to the occupation which brought them “daily bread” and little more—mangling-women, washerwomen, cobblers, tailors, chandlers, driving their trades in parlours and kitchens and back-rooms and garrets, and sometimes all of them under the same roof—brick-fields skirting gardens paled with staves of old casks, or timber pillaged from houses burnt down, and blackened and blistered by the flames—mounds of dockweed, nettles, coarse grass, and oyster shells heaped in rank confusion—small Dissenting chapels to teach, with no lack of illustration, the miseries of Earth, and plenty of new churches, erected with a little superfluous wealth, to show the way to Heaven.

At length these streets, becoming more straggling yet, dwindled and dwindled away, until there were only small garden patches bordering the road, with many a summer-house innocent of paint, and built of old timber or some fragments of a boat, green as the tough cabbage-stalks that grew about it, and grottoed at the seams with toadstools and tight-sticking snails. To these succeeded pert cottages, two and two, with plots of ground in front, laid out in angular beds with stiff box borders and narrow paths between, where footstep never strayed to make the gravel rough. Then, came the public-house, freshly painted in green and white, with tea-gardens and a bowling-green, spurning its old neighbour with the horse-trough where the waggons stopped; then fields; and then some houses, one by one, of goodly size, with lawns, some even with a lodge where dwelt a porter and his wife. Then came a turnpike; then fields again with trees and haystacks; then, a hill; and on the top of that, the traveller might stop, and—looking back at old St. Paul's looming through the smoke, its cross peeping above the cloud (if the day were clear) and glittering in the sun; and casting his eyes upon the Babel out of which it grew until he traced it down to the

furthest outposts of the invading army of bricks and mortar whose station lay for the present nearly at his feet—might feel at last that he was clear of London.

Near such a spot as this, and in a pleasant field, the old man and his little guide (if guide she were, who knew not whither they were bound) sat down to rest. She had had the precaution to furnish her basket with some slices of bread and meat, and here they made their frugal breakfast.

The freshness of the day, the singing of the birds, the beauty of the waving grass, the deep green leaves, the wild flowers, and the thousand exquisite scents and sounds that floated in the air,—deep joys to most of us, but most of all to those whose life is in a crowd, or who live solitarily in great cities as in the bucket of a human well,—sunk into their breasts and made them very glad. The child had repeated her artless prayers once that morning, more earnestly, perhaps, than she had ever done in all her life, but as she felt all this, they rose to her lips again. The old man took off his hat—he had no memory for the words—but he said amen, and that they were very good.

There had been an old copy of the Pilgrim's Progress, with strange plates, upon a shelf at home, over which she had often pored whole evenings, wondering whether it was true in every word, and where those distant countries with the curious names might be. As she looked back upon the place they had left, one part of it came strongly on her mind.

"Dear grandfather," she said, "only that this place is prettier and a great deal better than the real one, if that in the book is like it, I feel as if we were both Christian, and laid down on this grass all the cares and troubles we brought with us; never to take them up again."

"No—never to return—never to return," replied the old man, waving his hand toward the city. "Thou and I are free of it now, Nell. They shall never lure us back."

"Are you tired?" said the child. "Are you sure you don't feel ill from this long walk?"

"I shall never feel ill again, now that we are once away," was his reply. "Let us be stirring, Nell. We must be further away—a long, long way further. We are too near to stop, and be at rest. Come!"

There was a pool of clear water in the field, in which the child laved her hands and face, and cooled her feet before setting forth to walk again. She would have the old man refresh himself in this way too, and making him sit down upon the grass, cast the water on him

with her hands, and dried it with her simple dress.

"I can do nothing for myself, my darling," said the grandfather. "I don't know how it is, I could once, but the time's gone. Don't leave me, Nell; say that thou'lt not leave me. I loved thee all the while, indeed I did. If I lose thee too, my dear, I must die!"

He laid his head upon her shoulder and moaned piteously. The time had been, and a very few days before, when the child could not have restrained her tears, and must have wept with him. But now she soothed him with gentle and tender words, smiled at his thinking they could ever part, and rallied him cheerfully upon the jest. He was soon calmed and fell asleep, singing to himself in a low voice, like a little child.

He awoke refreshed, and they continued their journey. The road was pleasant, lying between beautiful pastures and fields of corn, above which, poised high in the clear blue sky, the lark trilled out her happy song. The air came laden with the fragrance it caught upon its way, and the bees, upborne upon its scented breath, hummed forth their drowsy satisfaction as they floated by.

They were now in the open country; the houses were very few and scattered at long intervals, often miles apart. Occasionally they came upon a cluster of poor cottages, some with a chair or low board put across the open door to keep the scrambling children from the road, others shut up close while all the family were working in the fields. These were often the commencement of a little village: and after an interval came a wheelwright's shed, or perhaps a blacksmith's forge; then a thriving farm with sleepy cows lying about the yard, and horses peering over the low wall and scampering away when harnessed horses passed upon the road, as though in triumph at their freedom. There were dull pigs too, turning up the ground in search of dainty food, and grunting their monotonous grumblings as they prowled about, or crossed each other in their quest; plump pigeons skimming round the roof or strutting on the eaves; and ducks and geese, far more graceful in their own conceit, waddling awkwardly about the edges of the pond, or sailing glibly on its surface. The farmyard passed, then came the little inn; the humbler beer-shop; and the village tradesman's; then the lawyer's and the parson's, at whose dread names the beer-shop trembled; the church then peeped out modestly from a clump of trees; then there were a few more cottages; then the cage, and pound, and not



unfrequently, on a bank by the wayside, a deep old dusty well. Then came the trim-hedged fields on either hand, and the open road again.

They walked all day, and slept that night at a small cottage where beds were let to travellers. Next morning they were afoot again, and though jaded at first, and very tired, recovered before long, and proceeded briskly forward.

They often stopped to rest, but only for a short space at a time, and still kept on, having had but slight refreshment since the morning. It was nearly five o'clock in the afternoon when, drawing near another cluster of labourers' huts, the child looked wistfully in each, doubtful at which to ask for permission to rest awhile, and buy a draught of milk.

It was not easy to determine, for she was timid, and fearful of being repulsed. Here was a crying child, and there a noisy wife. In this, the people seemed too poor; in that, too many. At length she stopped at one where the family were seated round a table—chiefly because there was an old man sitting in a cushioned chair beside the hearth, and she thought he was a grandfather, and would feel for hers.

There were, besides, the cottager and his wife, and three young sturdy children, brown as berries. The request was no sooner preferred than granted. The eldest boy ran out to fetch some milk, the second dragged two stools towards the door, and the youngest crept to his mother's gown, and looked at the strangers from beneath his sunburnt hand.

"God save you, master," said the old cottager in a thin piping voice; "are you travelling far?"

"Yes, sir, a long way," replied the child; for her grandfather appealed to her.

"From London?" inquired the old man.

The child said yes.

Ah! he had been in London many a time—used to go there often once, with waggons. It was nigh two-and-thirty year since he had been there last, and he did hear say there were great changes. Like enough! He had changed himself, since then. Two-and thirty year was a long time, and eighty-four a great age, though there was some he had known that had lived to very hard upon a hundred—and not so hearty as he neither—no, nothing like it.

"Sit thee down, master, in the elbow-chair," said the old man, knocking his stick upon the brick floor, and trying to do so sharply. "Take a pinch out o' that box; I don't take much myself, for it comes dear, but I find it wakes me up sometimes, and ye're but a boy to me. I should have a son pretty nigh as old as you if he'd lived, but they listed him for a so'ger—he

come back home, though, for all he had but one poor leg. He always said he'd be buried near the sun-dial he used to climb upon when he was a baby, did my poor boy, and his words come true—you can see the place with your own eyes; we've kept the turf up ever since."

He shook his head, and looking at his daughter with watery eyes, said she needn't be afraid that he was going to talk about that any more. He didn't wish to trouble nobody, and if he had troubled anybody by what he said, he asked pardon, that was all.

The milk arrived, and the child producing her little basket and selecting its best fragments for her grandfather, they made a hearty meal. The furniture of the room was very homely, of course—a few rough chairs and a table, a corner cupboard with their little stock of crockery and delf, a gaudy tea-tray, representing a lady in bright red, walking out with a very blue parasol, a few common, coloured Scripture subjects in frames upon the wall and chimney, an old dwarf clothes-press and an eight-day clock, with a few bright saucepans and a kettle, comprised the whole. But everything was clean and neat, and as the child glanced round, she felt a tranquil air of comfort and content to which she had long been unaccustomed.

"How far is it to any town or village?" she asked of the husband.

"A matter of good five mile, my dear," was the reply; "but you're not going on to-night?"

"Yes, yes, Nell," said the old man hastily, urging her too by signs. "Further on, further on, darling, further away, if we walk till mid-night."

"There's a good barn hard by, master," said the man, "or there's traveller's lodging, I know, at the Plow an' Harrer. Excuse me, but you do seem a little tired, and unless you're very anxious to get on——"

"Yes, yes, we are," returned the old man fretfully. "Further away, dear Nell, pray further away."

"We must go on, indeed," said the child, yielding to his restless wish. "We thank you very much, but we cannot stop so soon. I'm quite ready, grandfather."

But the woman had observed, from the young wanderer's gait, that one of her little feet was blistered and sore, and, being a woman and a mother too, she would not suffer her to go until she had washed the place and applied some simple remedy, which she did so carefully and with such a gentle hand—rough-grained and hard though it was with work—that the child's heart was too full to admit of her saying more

than a fervent "God bless you!" nor could she look back nor trust herself to speak, until they had left the cottage some distance behind. When she turned her head, she saw that the whole family, even the old grandfather, were standing in the road watching them as they went, and so with many waves of the hand, and cheering nods, and on one side at least not without tears, they parted company.

They trudged forward more slowly and painfully than they had done yet, for another mile or thereabouts, when they heard the sound of wheels behind them, and looking round, observed an empty cart approaching pretty briskly. The driver, on coming up to them, stopped his horse, and looked earnestly at Nell.

"Didn't you stop to rest at a cottage yonder?" he said.

"Yes, sir," replied the child.

"Ah! They asked me to look out for you," said the man. "I'm going your way. Give me your hand—jump up, master."

This was a great relief, for they were very much fatigued, and could scarcely crawl along. To them the jolting cart was a luxurious carriage, and the ride the most delicious in the world. Nell had scarcely settled herself on a little heap of straw in one corner, when she fell asleep, for the first time that day.

She was awakened by the stopping of the cart, which was about to turn up a by-lane. The driver kindly got down to help her out, and pointing to some trees at a very short distance before them, said that the town lay there, and that they had better take the path which they would see leading through the churchyard. Accordingly, towards this spot they directed their weary steps.

## CHAPTER XVI.

**T**HE sun was setting when they reached the wicket-gate at which the path began, and, as the rain falls upon the just and unjust alike, it shed its warm tint even upon the resting-places of the dead, and bade them be of good hope for its rising on the morrow. The church was old and grey, with ivy clinging to the walls, and round the porch. Shunning the tombs, it crept about the mounds, beneath which slept poor humble men: twining for them the first wreaths they had ever won, but wreaths less liable to wither, and far more lasting in their kind, than some which were graven deep in stone and marble, and told in

pompous terms of virtues meekly hidden for many a year, and only revealed at last to executors and mourning legatees.

The clergyman's horse, stumbling with a dull blunt sound among the graves, was cropping the grass; at once deriving orthodox consolation from the dead parishioners, and enforcing last Sunday's text that this was what all flesh came to; a lean ass who had sought to expound it also, without being qualified and ordained, was pricking his ears in an empty pound hard by, and looking with hungry eyes upon his priestly neighbour.

The old man and the child quitted the gravel path, and strayed among the tombs; for there the ground was soft, and easy to their tired feet. As they passed behind the church, they heard voices near at hand, and presently came on those who had spoken.

They were two men who were seated in easy attitudes upon the grass, and so busily engaged as to be at first unconscious of intruders. It was not difficult to divine that they were of a class of itinerant showmen—exhibitors of the freaks of Punch—for, perched cross-legged upon a tombstone behind them was a figure of that hero himself, his nose and chin as hooked and his face as beaming as usual. Perhaps his imperturbable character was never more strikingly developed, for he preserved his usual equable smile, notwithstanding that his body was dangling in a most uncomfortable position, all loose and limp and shapeless, while his long peaked cap, unequally balanced against his exceedingly slight legs, threatened every instant to bring him toppling down.

In part scattered upon the ground at the feet of the two men, and in part jumbled together in a long flat box, were the other persons of the Drama. The hero's wife and one child, the hobby-horse, the doctor, the foreign gentleman who, not being familiar with the language, is unable in the representation to express his ideas otherwise than by the utterance of the word "Shallalalah" three distinct times, the radical neighbour who will by no means admit that a tin bell is an organ, the executioner, and the devil, were all here. Their owners had evidently come to that spot to make some needful repairs in the stage arrangements, for one of them was engaged in binding together a small gallows with thread, while the other was intent upon fixing a new black wig, with the aid of a small hammer and some tacks, upon the head of the radical neighbour, who had been beaten bald.

They raised their eyes when the old man and his young companion were close upon them, and



pausing in their work, returned their looks of curiosity. One of them, the actual exhibitor no doubt, was a little merry-faced man with a twinkling eye and a red nose, who seemed to have unconsciously imbibed something of his hero's character. The other—that was he who took the money—had rather a careful and cautious look, which was perhaps inseparable from his occupation also.

The merry man was the first to greet the strangers with a nod; and following the old man's eyes, he observed that perhaps that was the first time he had ever seen a Punch off the stage. (Punch, it may be remarked, seemed to be pointing with the tip of his cap to a most flourishing epitaph, and to be chuckling over it with all his heart.)

"Why do you come here to do this?" said the old man, sitting down beside them, and looking at the figures with extreme delight.

"Why, you see," rejoined the little man, "we're putting up for to-night at the public-house yonder, and it wouldn't do to let 'em see the present company undergoing repair."

"No!" cried the old man, making signs to Nell to listen; "why not, eh? why not?"

"Because it would destroy all the delusion, and take away all the interest, wouldn't it?" replied the little man. "Would you care a ha'penny for the Lord Chancellor if you knowed him in private and without his wig? Certainly not."

"Good!" said the old man, venturing to touch one of the puppets, and drawing away his hand with a shrill laugh. "Are you going to show 'em to-night? Are you?"

"That is the intention, governor," replied the other, "and, unless I'm much mistaken, Tommy Codlin is a calculating at this minute what we've lost through your coming upon us. Cheer up, Tommy, it can't be much."

The little man accompanied these latter words with a wink, expressive of the estimate he had formed of the travellers' finances.

To this Mr. Codlin, who had a surly, grumbling manner, replied, as he twitched Punch off the tombstone and flung him into the box:

"I don't care if we haven't lost a farden, but you're too free. If you stood in front of the curtain and see the public's faces as I do, you'd know human natur' better."

"Ah! it's been the spoiling of you, Tommy, your taking to that branch," rejoined his companion. "When you played the ghost in the reg'lar drama in the fairs, you believed in everything—except ghosts. But now you're a universal mistruster. I never see a man so changed."

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP, 5.

"Never mind," said Mr. Codlin with the air of a discontented philosopher. "I know better now, and p'raps I'm sorry for it."

Turning over the figures in the box like one who knew and despised them, Mr. Codlin drew one forth, and held it up for the inspection of his friend:

"Look here; here's all this Judy's clothes falling to pieces again. You haven't got a needle and thread I suppose?"

The little man shook his head, and scratched it ruefully as he contemplated this severe indisposition of a principal performer. Seeing that they were at a loss, the child said timidly:

"I have a needle, sir, in my basket, and thread too. Will you let me try to mend it for you? I think I can do it neater than you could."

Even Mr. Codlin had nothing to urge against a proposal so seasonable. Nelly, kneeling down beside the box, was soon busily engaged in her task, and accomplishing it to a miracle.

While she was thus engaged, the merry little man looked at her with an interest which did not appear to be diminished when he glanced at her helpless companion. When she had finished her work he thanked her, and inquired whither they were travelling.

"N—no further to-night, I think," said the child, looking towards her grandfather.

"If you're wanting a place to stop at," the man remarked, "I should advise you to take up at the same house with us. That's it—the long, low, white house there. It's very cheap."

The old man, notwithstanding his fatigue, would have remained in the churchyard all night if his new acquaintance had stayed there too. As he yielded to this suggestion a ready and rapturous assent, they all rose and walked away together; he keeping close to the box of puppets in which he was quite absorbed, the merry little man carrying it slung over his arm by a strap attached to it for the purpose, Nelly having hold of her grandfather's hand, and Mr. Codlin sauntering slowly behind, casting up at the church tower and neighbouring trees such looks as he was accustomed in town practice to direct to drawing-room and nursery windows, when seeking for a profitable spot on which to plant the show.

The public-house was kept by a fat old landlord and landlady who made no objection to receiving their new guests, but praised Nelly's beauty, and were at once prepossessed in her behalf. There was no other company in the kitchen but the two showmen, and the child felt very thankful that they had fallen upon

such good quarters. The landlady was very much astonished to learn that they had come all the way from London, and appeared to have no little curiosity touching their farther destination. The child parried her inquiries as well as she could, and with no great trouble, for, finding that they appeared to give her pain, the old lady desisted.

"These two gentlemen have ordered supper in an hour's time," she said, taking her into the bar; "and your best plan will be to sup with them. Meanwhile, you shall have a little taste of something that'll do you good, for I am sure you must want it after all you have gone through to-day. Now, don't look after the old gentleman, because, when you've drank that, he shall have some too."

As nothing could induce the child to leave him alone, however, or to touch anything in which he was not the first and greatest sharer, the old lady was obliged to help him first. When they had been thus refreshed, the whole house hurried away into an empty stable where the show stood, and where, by the light of a few flaring candles stuck round a hoop which hung by a line from the ceiling, it was to be forthwith exhibited.

And now Mr. Thomas Codlin, the misanthrope, after blowing away at the Pan's pipes until he was intensely wretched, took his station on one side of the checked drapery which concealed the mover of the figures, and putting his hands in his pockets, prepared to reply to all questions and remarks of Punch, and to make a dismal feint of being his most intimate private friend, of believing in him to the fullest and most unlimited extent, of knowing that he enjoyed day and night a merry and glorious existence in that temple, and that he was at all times and under every circumstance the same intelligent and joyful person that the spectators then beheld him. All this Mr. Codlin did with the air of a man who had made up his mind for the worst, and was quite resigned; his eyes slowly wandering about during the briskest repartee to observe the effect upon the audience, and particularly the impression made upon the landlord and landlady, which might be productive of very important results in connection with the supper.

Upon this head, however, he had no cause for any anxiety, for the whole performance was applauded to the echo, and voluntary contributions were showered in with a liberality which testified yet more strongly to the general delight. Among the laughter none was more loud and frequent than the old man's. Nell's was un-

heard, for she, poor child, with her head drooping on his shoulder, had fallen asleep, and slept too soundly to be roused by any of his efforts to awaken her to a participation in his glee.

The supper was very good, but she was too tired to eat, and yet would not leave the old man until she had kissed him in his bed. He, happily insensible to every care and anxiety, sat listening with a vacant smile and admiring face to all that his new friends said; and it was not until they retired yawning to their room, that he followed the child up-stairs.

It was but a loft partitioned into two compartments, where they were to rest, but they were well pleased with their lodging, and had hoped for none so good. The old man was uneasy when he had lain down, and begged that Nell would come and sit at his bedside as she had done for so many nights. She hastened to him, and sat there till he slept.

There was a little window, hardly more than a chink in the wall, in her room, and when she left him, she opened it, quite wondering at the silence. The sight of the old church and the graves about it in the moonlight, and the dark trees whispering among themselves, made her more thoughtful than before. She closed the window again, and sitting down upon the bed, thought of the life that was before them.

She had a little money, but it was very little, and when that was gone, they must begin to beg. There was one piece of gold among it, and an emergency might come when its worth to them would be increased a hundred-fold. It would be best to hide this coin, and never produce it unless their case was absolutely desperate, and no other resource was left them.

Her resolution taken, she sewed the piece of gold into her dress, and, going to bed with a lighter heart, sunk into a deep slumber.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

**A**NOTHER bright day shining in through the small casement, and claiming fellowship with the kindred eyes of the child, awoke her. At sight of the strange room and its unaccustomed objects she started up in alarm, wondering how she had been moved from the familiar chamber in which she seemed to have fallen asleep last night, and whither she had been conveyed. But another glance around called to her mind



all that had lately passed, and she sprung from her bed, hoping and trustful.

It was yet early, and the old man being still asleep, she walked out into the churchyard, brushing the dew from the long grass with her feet, and often turning aside into places where it grew longer than in others, that she might not tread upon the graves. She felt a curious kind of pleasure in lingering among these houses of the dead, and read the inscriptions on the tombs of the good people (a great number of good people were buried there), passing on from one to another with increasing interest.

It was a very quiet place, as such a place should be, save for the cawing of the rooks who had built their nests among the branches of some tall old trees, and were calling to one another, high up in air. First, one sleek bird, hovering near his ragged house as it swung and dangled in the wind, uttered his hoarse cry, quite by chance as it would seem, and in a sober tone, as though he were but talking to himself. Another answered, and he called again, but louder than before; then another spoke, and then another; and each time the first, aggravated by contradiction, insisted on his case more strongly. Other voices, silent till now, struck in from boughs lower down and higher up and midway, and to the right and left, and from the tree-tops; and others, arriving hastily from the grey church turrets and old belfry window, joined the clamour which rose and fell, and swelled and dropped again, and still went on; and all this noisy contention amidst a skimming to and fro, and lighting on fresh branches, and frequent change of place, which satirised the old restlessness of those who lay so still beneath the moss and turf below, and the strife in which they had worn away their lives.

Frequently raising her eyes to the trees whence these sounds came down, and feeling as though they made the place more quiet than perfect silence would have done, the child loitered from grave to grave, now stopping to replace with careful hands the bramble which had started from some green mound it helped to keep in shape, and now peeping through one of the low latticed windows into the church, with its worm-eaten books upon the desks, and baize of whitened green mouldering from the pewsides and leaving the naked wood to view. There were the seats where the poor old people sat, worn, spare, and yellow like themselves; the rugged font where children had their names, the homely altar where they knelt in after life, the plain black trestles that bore their weight on

their last visit to the cool old shady church. Everything told of long use and quiet slow decay; the very bell-rope in the porch was frayed into a fringe, and hoary with old age.

She was looking at a humble stone which told of a young man who had died at twenty-three years old, fifty-five years ago, when she heard a faltering step approaching, and looking round, saw a feeble woman bent with the weight of years, who tottered to the foot of that same grave, and asked her to read the writing on the stone. The old woman thanked her when she had done, saying that she had had the words by heart for many a long, long year, but could not see them now.

"Where was his mother?" said the child.

"I was his wife, my dear."

She the wife of a young man of three-and-twenty! Ah, true! It was fifty-five years ago.

"You wonder to hear me say that," remarked the old woman, shaking her head. "You're not the first. Older folk than you have wondered at the same thing before now. Yes, I was his wife. Death doesn't change us more than life, my dear."

"Do you come here often?" asked the child.

"I sit here very often in the summer-time," she answered. "I used to come here once to cry and mourn, but that was a weary while ago, bless God!"

"I pluck the daisies as they grow, and take them home," said the old woman, after a short silence. "I like no flowers so well as these, and haven't for five-and-fifty years. It's a long time, and I'm getting very old!"

Then growing garrulous upon a theme which was new to one listener, though it were but a child, she told her how she had wept and moaned and prayed to die herself, when this happened; and how, when she first came to that place, a young creature strong in love and grief, she had hoped that her heart was breaking, as it seemed to be. But that time passed by, and although she continued to be sad when she came there, still she could bear to come, and so went on until it was pain no longer, but a solemn pleasure, and a duty she had learned to like. And now that five-and-fifty years were gone, she spoke of the dead man as if he had been her son or grandson, with a kind of pity for his youth, growing out of her own old age, and an exalting of his strength and manly beauty as compared with her own weakness and decay; and yet she spoke about him as her husband too, and thinking of herself in connection with him as she used to be, and not as she was now, talked of their meeting in another world as if

he were dead but yesterday, and she, separated from her former self, were thinking of the happiness of that comely girl who seemed to have died with him.

The child left her gathering the flowers that grew upon the grave, and thoughtfully retraced her steps.

The old man was by this time up and dressed. Mr. Codlin, still doomed to contemplate the harsh realities of existence, was packing among his linen the candle-ends which had been saved from the previous night's performance; while his

companion received the compliments of all the loungers in the stable-yard, who, unable to separate him from the master mind of Punch, set him down as next in importance to that merry outlaw, and loved him scarcely less. When he had sufficiently acknowledged his popularity he came in to breakfast, at which meal they all sat down together.

"And where are you going to-day?" said the little man, addressing himself to Nell.

"Indeed I hardly know,—we have not determined yet," replied the child.



"NELLY, KNEELING DOWN BESIDE THE BOX, WAS SOON BUSILY ENGAGED IN HER TASK."

"We're going on to the races," said the little man. "If that's your way, and you like to have us for company, let us travel together. If you prefer going alone, only say the word, and you'll find that we shan't trouble you."

"We'll go with you," said the old man. "Nell,—with them, with them."

The child considered for a moment, and reflecting that she must shortly beg, and could scarcely hope to do so at a better place than where crowds of rich ladies and gentlemen were assembled together for purposes of enjoyment and festivity, determined to accompany these

men so far. She therefore thanked the little man for his offer, and said, glancing timidly towards his friend, that if there was no objection to their accompanying them as far as the race town—

"Objection!" said the little man. "Now be gracious for once, Tommy, and say that you'd rather they went with us. I know you would. Be gracious, Tommy."

"Trotters," said Mr. Codlin, who talked very slowly and ate very greedily, as is not uncommon with philosophers and misanthropes; "you're too free."



"Why, what harm can it do?" urged the other.

"No harm at all in this particular case, perhaps," replied Mr. Codlin; "but the principle's a dangerous one, and you're too free I tell you."

"Well, are they to go with us or not?"

"Yes, they are," said Mr. Codlin; "but you might have made a favour of it, mightn't you?"

The real name of the little man was Harris, but it had gradually merged into the less euphonious one of Trotters, which, with the prefatory adjective, Short, had been conferred upon him by reason of the small size of his legs. Short Trotters, however, being a compound name, inconvenient of use in friendly dialogue, the gentleman on whom it had been bestowed was known among his intimates either as "Short," or "Trotters," and was seldom accosted at full length as Short Trotters, except in formal conversations and on occasions of ceremony.

Short, then, or Trotters, as the reader pleases, returned unto the remonstrance of his friend Mr. Thomas Codlin a jocose answer calculated to turn aside his discontent; and applying himself with great relish to the cold boiled beef, the tea, and bread-and-butter, strongly impressed upon his companions that they should do the like. Mr. Codlin, indeed, required no such persuasion, as he had already eaten as much as he could possibly carry, and was now moistening his clay with strong ale, whereof he took deep draughts with a silent relish, and invited nobody to partake,—thus again strongly indicating his misanthropical turn of mind.

Breakfast being at length over, Mr. Codlin called the bill, and charging the ale to the company generally (a practice also savouring of misanthropy), divided the sum-total into two fair and equal parts, assigning one moiety to himself and friend, and the other to Nelly and her grandfather. These being duly discharged, and all things ready for their departure, they took farewell of the landlord and landlady, and resumed their journey.

And here Mr. Codlin's false position in society, and the effect it wrought upon his wounded spirit, were strongly illustrated; for whereas he had been last night accosted by Mr. Punch as "master," and had by inference left the audience to understand that he maintained that individual for his own luxurious entertainment and delight, here he was, now, painfully walking beneath the burden of that same Punch's temple, and bearing it bodily upon his shoulders on a sultry day and along a dusty road. In place of enlivening his patron with a constant fire of wit, or the cheerful rattle of his quarter-staff on the heads of his relations and acquaintance, here was that beaming

Punch utterly devoid of spine, all slack and drooping in a dark box, with his legs doubled up round his neck, and not one of his social qualities remaining.

Mr. Codlin trudged heavily on, exchanging a word or two at intervals with Short, and stopping to rest and growl occasionally. Short led the way; with the flat box, the private luggage (which was not extensive) tied up in a bundle, and a brazen trumpet slung from his shoulder-blade. Nell and her grandfather walked next him on either hand, and Thomas Codlin brought up the rear.

When they came to any town or village, or even to a detached house of good appearance, Short blew a blast upon the brazen trumpet, and carolled a fragment of a song in that hilarious tone common to Punches and their consorts. If people hurried to the windows, Mr. Codlin pitched the temple, and hastily unfurling the drapery and concealing Short therewith, flourished hysterically on the Pipes, and performed an air. Then the entertainment began as soon as might be; Mr. Codlin having the responsibility of deciding on its length, and of protracting or expediting the time for the hero's final triumph over the enemy of mankind, according as he judged that the after-crop of halfpence would be plentiful or scant. When it had been gathered in to the last farthing, he resumed his load, and on they went again.

Sometimes they played out the toll across a bridge or ferry, and once exhibited by particular desire at a turnpike, where the collector, being drunk in his solitude, paid down a shilling to have it to himself. There was one small place of rich promise in which their hopes were blighted, for a favourite character in the play having gold lace upon his coat, and being a meddling, wooden-headed fellow, was held to be a libel on the beadle, for which reason the authorities enforced a quick retreat; but they were generally well received, and seldom left a town without a troop of ragged children shouting at their heels.

They made a long day's journey, despite these interruptions, and were yet upon the road when the moon was shining in the sky. Short beguiled the time with songs and jests, and made the best of everything that happened. Mr. Codlin, on the other hand, cursed his fate, and all the hollow things of earth (but Punch especially), and limped along with the theatre on his back, a prey to the bitterest chagrin.

They had stopped to rest beneath a finger-post where four roads met, and Mr. Codlin, in his deep misanthropy, had let down the drapery and seated himself in the bottom of the show,

invisible to mortal eyes, and disdainful of the company of his fellow-creatures, when two monstrous shadows were seen stalking towards them from a turning in the road by which they had come. The child was at first quite terrified by the sight of these gaunt giants—for such they looked as they advanced with lofty strides beneath the shadow of the trees—but Short, telling her there was nothing to fear, blew a blast upon the trumpet, which was answered by a cheerful shout.

"It's Grinder's lot, an't it?" cried Mr. Short, in a loud key.

"Yes," replied a couple of shrill voices.

"Come on, then," said Short. "Let's have a look at you. I thought it was you."

Thus invited, "Grinder's lot" approached with redoubled speed, and soon came up with the little party.

Mr. Grinder's company, familiarly termed a lot, consisted of a young gentleman and a young lady on stilts, and Mr. Grinder himself, who used his natural legs for pedestrian purposes, and carried at his back a drum. The public costume of the young people was of the Highland kind, but the night being damp and cold, the young gentleman wore over his kilt a man's pea-jacket reaching to his ankles, and a glazed hat; the young lady too was muffled in an old cloth pelisse, and had a handkerchief tied about her head. Their Scotch bonnets ornamented with plumes of jet-black feathers Mr. Grinder carried on his instrument.

"Bound for the races, I see," said Mr. Grinder, coming up out of breath. "So are we. How are you, Short?" With that they shook hands in a very friendly manner. The young people being too high up for the ordinary salutations, saluted Short after their own fashion. The young gentleman twisted up his right stilt and patted him on the shoulder, and the young lady rattled her tambourine.

"Practice?" said Short, pointing to the stilts.

"No," returned Grinder. "It comes either to walkin' in 'em or carryin' of 'em, and they like walkin' in 'em best. It's very pleasant for the prospects. Which road are you takin'?"

"We go the highest."

"Why, the fact is," said Short, "that we are going the longest way, because then we could stop for the night, a mile and a half on. But three or four mile gained to-night is so many saved to-morrow, and if you keep on, I think our best way is to do the same."

"Where's your partner?" inquired Grinder.

"Here he is," cried Mr. Thomas Codlin, presenting his head and face in the proscenium of

the stage, and exhibiting an expression of countenance not often seen there; "and he'll see *his* partner boiled alive before he'll go on to-night. That's what *he* says."

"Well, don't say such things as them in a spear which is devoted to something pleasanter," urged Short. "Respect associations, Tommy, even if you do cut up rough."

"Rough or smooth," said Mr. Codlin, beating his hand on the little foot-board, where Punch, when suddenly struck with the symmetry of his legs and their capacity for silk stockings, is accustomed to exhibit them to popular admiration, "rough or smooth, I won't go further than the mile and a half to-night. I put up at the Jolly Sandboys, and nowhere else. If you like to come there, come there. If you like to go on by yourself, go on by yourself, and do without me if you can."

So saying, Mr. Codlin disappeared from the scene, and immediately presenting himself outside the theatre, took it on his shoulders at a jerk, and made off with most remarkable agility.

Any further controversy being now out of the question, Short was fain to part with Mr. Grinder and his pupils, and to follow his morose companion. After lingering at the finger-post for a few minutes to see the stilts frisking away in the moonlight, and the bearer of the drum toiling slowly after them, he blew a few notes upon the trumpet as a parting salute, and hastened with all speed to follow Mr. Codlin. With this view he gave his unoccupied hand to Nell, and bidding her be of good cheer as they would soon be at the end of their journey for that night, and stimulating the old man with a similar assurance, led them at a pretty swift pace towards their destination, which he was the less unwilling to make for, as the moon was now overcast and the clouds were threatening rain.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

**T**HE Jolly Sandboys was a small roadside inn of pretty ancient date, with a sign, representing three Sandboys increasing their jollity with as many jugs of ale and bags of gold, creaking and swinging on its post on the opposite side of the road. As the travellers had observed that day many indications of their drawing nearer and nearer to the race town, such as gipsy camps, carts laden with gambling booths and their appurtenances, itinerant showmen of various kinds, and beggars and



trampers of every degree, all wending their way in the same direction, Mr. Codlin was fearful of finding the accommodations forestalled: this fear increasing as he diminished the distance between himself and the hostelry, he quickened his pace, and notwithstanding the burden he had to carry, maintained a round trot until he reached the threshold. Here he had the gratification of finding that his fears were without foundation, for the landlord was leaning against the door-post looking lazily at the rain, which had by this time begun to descend heavily, and no tinkling of cracked bell, nor boisterous shout, nor noisy chorus, gave note of company within.

"All alone?" said Mr. Codlin, putting down his burden and wiping his forehead.

"All alone as yet," rejoined the landlord, glancing at the sky, "but we shall have more company to-night I expect. Here, one of you boys, carry that show into the barn. Make haste in out of the wet, Tom; when it came on to rain, I told 'em to make the fire up, and there's a glorious blaze in the kitchen I can tell you."

Mr. Codlin followed with a willing mind, and soon found that the landlord had not commended his preparations without good reason. A mighty fire was blazing on the hearth and roaring up the wide chimney with a cheerful sound, which a large iron cauldron, bubbling and simmering in the heat, lent its pleasant aid to swell. There was a deep red ruddy blush upon the room, and when the landlord stirred the fire, sending the flames skipping and leaping up—when he took off the lid of the iron pot, and there rushed out a savoury smell, while the bubbling sound grew deeper and more rich, and an unctuous steam came floating out, hanging in a delicious mist above their heads—when he did this, Mr. Codlin's heart was touched. He sat down in the chimney-corner and smiled.

Mr. Codlin sat smiling in the chimney-corner, eyeing the landlord as with a roguish look he held the cover in his hand, and feigning that his doing so was needful to the welfare of the cookery, suffered the delightful steam to tickle the nostrils of his guest. The glow of the fire was upon the landlord's bald head, and upon his twinkling eye, and upon his watering mouth, and upon his pimpled face, and upon his round fat figure. Mr. Codlin drew his sleeve across his lips, and said in a murmuring voice, "What is it?"

"It's a stew of tripe," said the landlord, smacking his lips, "and cow-heel," smacking them again, "and bacon," smacking them once more, "and steak," smacking them for the fourth time, "and peas, cauliflowers, new potatoes, and

sparrow-grass, all working up together in one delicious gravy." Having come to the climax, he smacked his lips a great many times, and taking a long hearty sniff of the fragrance that was hovering about, put on the cover again with the air of one whose toils on earth were over.

"At what time will it be ready?" asked Mr. Codlin faintly.

"It will be done to a turn," said the landlord, looking up at the clock—and the very clock had a colour in its fat white face, and looked a clock for Jolly Sandboys to consult—"it'll be done to a turn at twenty-two minutes before eleven."

"Then," said Mr. Codlin, "fetch me a pint of warm ale, and don't let nobody bring into the room even so much as a biscuit till the time arrives."

Nodding his approval of this decisive and manly course of procedure, the landlord retired to draw the beer, and presently returning with it, applied himself to warm the same in a small tin vessel shaped funnel-wise, for the convenience of sticking it far down in the fire and getting at the bright places. This was soon done, and he handed it over to Mr. Codlin with that creamy froth upon the surface which is one of the happy circumstances attendant on mulled malt.

Greatly softened by this soothing beverage, Mr. Codlin now bethought him of his companions, and acquainted mine host of the Sandboys that their arrival might be shortly looked for. The rain was rattling against the windows and pouring down in torrents, and such was Mr. Codlin's extreme amiability of mind, that he more than once expressed his earnest hope that they would not be so foolish as to get wet.

At length they arrived, drenched with the rain and presenting a most miserable appearance, notwithstanding that Short had sheltered the child as well as he could under the skirts of his own coat, and they were nearly breathless from the haste they had made. But their steps were no sooner heard upon the road than the landlord, who had been at the outer door anxiously watching for their coming, rushed into the kitchen and took the cover off. The effect was electrical. They all came in with smiling faces, though the wet was dripping from their clothes upon the floor, and Short's first remark was, "What a delicious smell!"

It is not very difficult to forget rain and mud by the side of a cheerful fire, and in a bright room. They were furnished with slippers and such dry garments as the house or their own bundles afforded, and ensconcing themselves, as Mr. Codlin had already done, in the warm chimney-corner, soon forgot their late troubles,

or only remembered them as enhancing the delights of the present time. Overpowered by the warmth and comfort and the fatigue they had undergone, Nelly and the old man had not long taken their seats here when they fell asleep.

"Who are they?" whispered the landlord.

Short shook his head, and wished he knew himself.

"Don't *you* know?" asked the host, turning to Mr. Codlin.

"Not I," he replied. "They're no good, I suppose."

"They're no harm," said Short. "Depend upon that. I tell you what—it's plain that the old man ain't in his right mind——"

"If you haven't got anything newer than that to say," growled Mr. Codlin, glancing at the clock, "you'd better let us fix our minds upon the supper, and not disturb us."

"Hear me out, won't you?" retorted his friend. "It's very plain to me, besides, that they're not used to this way of life. Don't tell me that that handsome child has been in the habit of prowling about as she's done these last two or three days. I know better."

"Well, who *does* tell you she has?" growled Mr. Codlin, again glancing at the clock, and from it to the cauldron. "Can't you think of anything more suitable to present circumstances than saying things, and then contradicting 'em?"

"I wish somebody would give you your supper," returned Short; "for there'll be no peace till you've got it. Have you seen how anxious the old man is to get on—always wanting to be furder away—furder away? Have you seen that?"

"Ah! what then?" muttered Thomas Codlin.

"This, then," said Short. "He has given his friends the slip. Mind what I say,—he has given his friends the slip, and persuaded this delicate young creature, all along of her fondness for him, to be his guide and travelling companion—where to, he knows no more than the man in the moon. Now I'm not a-going to stand that."

"*You're* not a-going to stand that!" cried Mr. Codlin, glancing at the clock again, and pulling his hair with both hands in a kind of frenzy, but whether occasioned by his companion's observation or the tardy pace of Time, it was difficult to determine. "Here's a world to live in!"

"I," repeated Short emphatically and slowly, "am not a-going to stand it. I am not a-going to see this fair young child a falling into bad hands, and getting among people that she's no more fit for than they are to get among angels

as their ordinary chums. Therefore, when they develop an intention of parting company from us, I shall take measures for detaining of 'em, and restoring 'em to their friends, who I dare say have had their disconsolation pasted up on every wall in London by this time."

"Short," said Mr. Codlin, who with his head upon his hands and his elbows on his knees, had been shaking himself impatiently from side to side up to this point, and occasionally stamping on the ground, but who now looked up with eager eyes; "it's possible that there may be uncommon good sense in what you've said. If there is, and there should be a reward, Short, remember that we're partners in everything!"

His companion had only time to nod a brief assent to this position, for the child awoke at the instant. They had drawn close together during the previous whispering, and now hastily separated, and were rather awkwardly endeavouring to exchange some casual remarks in their usual tone, when strange footsteps were heard without, and fresh company entered.

These were no other than four very dismal dogs, who came pattering in one after the other, headed by an old bandy dog of particularly mournful aspect, who, stopping when the last of his followers had got as far as the door, erected himself upon his hind-legs and looked round at his companions, who immediately stood upon their hind-legs, in a grave and melancholy row. Nor was this the only remarkable circumstance about these dogs, for each of them wore a kind of little coat of some gaudy colour trimmed with tarnished spangles, and one of them had a cap upon his head, tied very carefully under his chin, which had fallen down upon his nose, and completely obscured one eye; add to this that the gaudy coats were all wet through and discoloured with rain, and that the wearers were splashed and dirty, and some idea may be formed of the unusual appearance of these new visitors to the Jolly Sandboys.

Neither Short nor the landlord nor Thomas Codlin, however, was the least surprised, merely remarking that these were Jerry's dogs, and that Jerry could not be far behind. So there the dogs stood, patiently winking and gaping and looking extremely hard at the boiling pot, until Jerry himself appeared, when they all dropped down at once, and walked about the room in their natural manner. This posture, it must be confessed, did not much improve their appearance, as their own personal tails and their coat-tails—both capital things in their way—did not agree together.

Jerry, the manager of these dancing dogs,



was a tall black-whiskered man in a velveten coat, who seemed well known to the landlord and his guests, and accosted them with great cordiality. Disencumbering himself of a barrel-organ which he placed upon a chair, and retaining in his hand a small whip wherewith to awe his company of comedians, he came up to the fire to dry himself, and entered into conversation.

"Your people don't usually travel in character, do they?" said Short, pointing to the dresses of the dogs. "It must come expensive if they do."

"No," replied Jerry, "no, it's not the custom with us. But we've been playing a little on the road to-day, and we come out with a new wardrobe at the races, so I didn't think it worth while to stop to undress. Down, Pedro!"

This was addressed to the dog with the cap on, who, being a new member of the company and not quite certain of his duty, kept his unobscured eye anxiously on his master, and was perpetually starting upon his hind-legs when there was no occasion, and falling down again.

"I've got a animal here," said Jerry, putting his hand into the capacious pocket of his coat, and diving into one corner as if he were feeling for a small orange or an apple or some such article, "a animal here wot I think you know something of, Short!"

"Ah!" cried Short, "let's have a look at him."

"Here he is," said Jerry, producing a little terrier from his pocket. "He was once a Toby of yours, warn't he?"

In some versions of the great drama of Punch there is a small dog—a modern innovation—supposed to be the private property of that gentleman, whose name is always Toby. This Toby has been stolen in youth from another gentleman, and fraudulently sold to the confiding hero, who, having no guile himself, has no suspicion that it lurks in others; but Toby, entertaining a grateful recollection of his old master, and scorning to attach himself to any new patrons, not only refuses to smoke a pipe at the bidding of Punch, but, to mark his old fidelity more strongly, seizes him by the nose and wrings the same with violence, at which instance of canine attachment the spectators are deeply affected. This was the character which the little terrier in question had once sustained; if there had been any doubt upon the subject, he would speedily have resolved it by his conduct; for not only did he, on seeing Short, give the strongest tokens of recognition, but, catching sight of the flat box, he barked so furiously at the pasteboard nose which he knew was inside,

that his master was obliged to gather him up and put him into his pocket again, to the great relief of the whole company.

The landlord now busied himself in laying the cloth, in which process Mr. Codlin obligingly assisted by setting forth his own knife and fork in the most convenient place, and establishing himself behind them. When everything was ready, the landlord took off the cover for the last time, and then indeed there burst forth such a goodly promise of supper, that if he had offered to put it on again, or had hinted at postponement, he would certainly have been sacrificed on his own hearth.

However, he did nothing of the kind, but instead thereof assisted a stout servant-girl in turning the contents of the cauldron into a large tureen; a proceeding which the dogs, proof against various hot splashes which fell upon their noses, watched with terrible eagerness. At length the dish was lifted on the table, and mugs of ale having been previously set round, little Nell ventured to say grace, and supper began.

At this juncture the poor dogs were standing on their hind-legs quite surprisingly; the child, having pity on them, was about to cast some morsels of food to them before she tasted it herself, hungry though she was, when their master interposed.

"No, my dear, no, not an atom from anybody's hand but mine, if you please. That dog," said Jerry, pointing out the old leader of the troop, and speaking in a terrible voice, "lost a halfpenny to-day. *He* goes without his supper."

The unfortunate creature dropped upon his fore-legs directly, wagged his tail, and looked imploringly at his master.

"You must be more careful, sir," said Jerry, walking coolly to the chair where he had placed the organ, and setting the stop. "Come here. Now, sir, you play away at that while we have supper, and leave off if you dare!"

The dog immediately began to grind most mournful music. His master, having shown him the whip, resumed his seat and called up the others, who, at his directions, formed in a row, standing upright as a file of soldiers.

"Now, gentlemen," said Jerry, looking at them attentively. "The dog whose name's called, eats. The dogs whose names an't called, keep quiet. Carlo!"

The lucky individual whose name was called snapped up the morsel thrown towards him, but none of the others moved a muscle. In this manner they were fed at the discretion of their master. Meanwhile the dog in disgrace ground

hard at the organ, sometimes in quick time, sometimes in slow, but never leaving off for an instant. When the knives and forks rattled very much, or any of his fellows got an unusually large piece of fat, he accompanied the music with a short howl, but he immediately checked it on his master looking round, and applied himself with increased diligence to the Old Hundredth.

## CHAPTER XIX.

**S**UPPER was not yet over, when there arrived at the Jolly Sandboys two more travellers bound for the same haven as the rest, who had been walking in the rain for some hours, and came in shining and heavy with water.

One of these was the proprietor of a giant, and a little lady without legs or arms, who had jogged forward in a van; the other, a silent gentleman who earned his living by showing tricks upon the cards, and who had rather deranged the natural expression of his countenance by putting small leaden lozenges into his eyes and bringing them out at his mouth, which was one of his professional accomplishments. The name of the first of these new-comers was Vuffin; the other, probably as a pleasant satire upon his ugliness, was called Sweet William. To render them as comfortable as he could, the landlord bestirred himself nimbly, and in a very short time both gentlemen were perfectly at their ease.

"How's the Giant?" said Short when they all sat smoking round the fire.

"Rather weak upon his legs," returned Mr. Vuffin. "I begin to be afraid he's going at the knees."

"That's a bad look-out," said Short.

"Ay! Bad indeed," replied Mr. Vuffin, contemplating the fire with a sigh. "Once get a giant shaky on his legs, and the public care no more about him than they do for a dead cabbage-stalk."

"What becomes of the old giants?" said Short, turning to him again after a little reflection.

"They're usually kept in carawans to wait upon the dwarfs," said Mr. Vuffin.

"The maintaining of 'em must come expensive, when they can't be shown, eh?" remarked Short, eyeing him doubtfully.

"It's better than letting 'em go upon the parish or about the streets," said Mr. Vuffin. "Once make a giant common, and giants will never draw again. Look at wooden legs. If

there was only one man with a wooden leg what a property *he'd* be!"

"So he would!" observed the landlord and Short both together. "That's very true."

"Instead of which," pursued Mr. Vuffin, "if you was to advertise Shakspeare played entirely by wooden legs, it's my belief you wouldn't draw a sixpence."

"I don't suppose you would," said Short. And the landlord said so too.

"This shows, you see," said Mr. Vuffin, waving his pipe with an argumentative air, "this shows the policy of keeping the used-up giants still in the carawans, where they get food and lodging for nothing all their lives, and in general very glad they are to stop there. There was one giant—a black 'un—as left his carawan some year ago, and took to carrying coach-bills about London, making himself as cheap as crossing-sweepers. He died. I make no insinuation against anybody in particular," said Mr. Vuffin, looking solemnly round, "but he was ruining the trade;—and he died."

The landlord drew his breath hard, and looked at the owner of the dogs, who nodded and said gruffly that *he* remembered.

"I know you do, Jerry," said Mr. Vuffin with profound meaning. "I know you remember it, Jerry, and the universal opinion was, that it served him right. Why, I remember the time when old Maunders as had three-and-twenty wans—I remember the time when old Maunders had in his cottage in Spa Fields in the winter-time, when the season was over, eight male and female dwarfs setting down to dinner every day, who was waited on by eight old giants in green coats, red smalls, blue cotton stockings, and high-lows; and there was one dwarf as had grown elderly and wicious, who, whenever his giant wasn't quick enough to please him, used to stick pins in his legs, not being able to reach up any higher. I know that's a fact, for Maunders told it me himself."

"What about the dwarfs when *they* get old?" inquired the landlord.

"The older the dwarf is, the better worth he is," returned Mr. Vuffin; "a grey-headed dwarf, well wrinkled, is beyond all suspicion. But a giant weak in the legs, and not standing upright!—keep him in the carawan, but never show him, never show him, for any persuasion that can be offered."

While Mr. Vuffin and his two friends smoked their pipes and beguiled the time with such conversation as this, the silent gentleman sat in a warm corner, swallowing, or seeming to swallow, sixpennyworth of halipence for practice, balanc-



ing a feather upon his nose, and rehearsing other feats of dexterity of that kind, without paying any regard whatever to the company, who in their turn left him utterly unnoticed. At length the weary child prevailed upon her grandfather to retire, and they withdrew, leaving the company yet seated round the fire, and the dogs fast asleep at a humble distance.

After bidding the old man good night, Nell retired to her poor garret, but had scarcely closed the door when it was gently tapped at. She opened it directly, and was a little startled by the sight of Mr. Thomas Codlin, whom she had left, to all appearance, fast asleep down-stairs.

"What is the matter?" said the child.

"Nothing's the matter, my dear," returned her visitor. "I'm your friend. Perhaps you haven't thought so, but it's me that's your friend—not him."

"Not who?" the child inquired.

"Short, my dear. I tell you what," said Codlin, "for all his having a kind of way with him that you'd be very apt to like, I'm the real, open-hearted man. I mayn't look it, but I am indeed."

The child began to be alarmed, considering that the ale had taken effect upon Mr. Codlin, and that this commendation of himself was the consequence.

"Short's very well, and seems kind," resumed the misanthrope, "but he overdoes it. Now I don't."

Certainly, if there were any fault in Mr. Codlin's usual deportment, it was that he rather underdid his kindness to those about him than overdid it. But the child was puzzled, and could not tell what to say.

"Take my advice," said Codlin; "don't ask me why, but take it. As long as you travel with us, keep as near me as you can. Don't offer to leave us—not on any account—but always stick to me, and say that I'm your friend. Will you bear that in mind, my dear, and always say that it was me that was your friend?"

"Say so where,—and when?" inquired the child innocently.

"Oh! nowhere in particular," replied Codlin, a little put out as it seemed by the question; "I am only anxious that you should think me so, and do me justice. You can't think what an interest I have in you. Why didn't you tell me your little history—that about you and the poor old gentleman? I'm the best adviser that ever was, and so interested in you—so much more interested than Short. I think they're breaking up down-stairs; you needn't tell Short, you

know, that we've had this little talk together. God bless you! Recollect the friend. Codlin's the friend, not Short. Short's very well as far as he goes, but the real friend is Codlin—not Short."

Eking out these professions with a number of benevolent and protecting looks and great fervour of manner, Thomas Codlin stole away on tiptoe, leaving the child in a state of extreme surprise. She was still ruminating upon his curious behaviour, when the floor of the crazy stairs and landing cracked beneath the tread of the other travellers, who were passing to their beds. When they had all passed, and the sound of their footsteps had died away, one of them returned, and after a little hesitation and rustling in the passage, as if he were doubtful what door to knock at, knocked at hers.

"Yes?" said the child from within.

"It's me—Short," a voice called through the keyhole. "I only wanted to say that we must be off early to-morrow morning, my dear, because, unless we get the start of the dogs and the conjurer, the villages won't be worth a penny. You'll be sure to be stirring early, and go with us? I'll call you."

The child answered in the affirmative, and, returning his "good night," heard him creep away. She felt some uneasiness at the anxiety of these men, increased by the recollection of their whispering together down-stairs, and their slight confusion when she awoke, nor was she quite free from a misgiving that they were not the fittest companions she could have stumbled on. Her uneasiness, however, was nothing, weighed against her fatigue; and she soon forgot it in sleep.

Very early next morning, Short fulfilled his promise, and, knocking softly at her door, entreated that she would get up directly, as the proprietor of the dogs was still snoring, and if they lost no time they might get a good deal in advance both of him and the conjurer, who was talking in his sleep, and, from what he could be heard to say, appeared to be balancing a donkey in his dreams. She started from her bed without delay, and roused the old man with so much expedition that they were both ready as soon as Short himself, to that gentleman's unspeakable gratification and relief.

After a very unceremonious and scrambling breakfast, of which the staple commodities were bacon and bread, and beer, they took leave of the landlord, and issued from the door of the Jolly Sandboys. The morning was fine and warm, the ground cool to the feet after the late rain, the hedges gayer and more green, the air

clear, and everything fresh and healthful. Surrounded by these influences, they walked on pleasantly enough.

They had not gone very far, when the child was again struck by the altered behaviour of Mr. Thomas Codlin, who, instead of plodding on sulkily by himself as he had theretofore done, kept close to her, and when he had an opportunity of looking at her unseen by his companion, warned her, by certain wry faces and jerks of the head, not to put any trust in Short, but to

reserve all confidences for Codlin. Neither did he confine himself to looks and gestures, for when she and her grandfather were walking on beside the aforesaid Short, and that little man was talking with his accustomed cheerfulness on a variety of indifferent subjects, Thomas Codlin testified his jealousy and distrust by following close at her heels, and occasionally admonishing her ankles with the legs of the theatre in a very abrupt and painful manner.

All these proceedings naturally made the child



"NOW, GENTLEMEN," SAID JERRY, LOOKING AT THEM ATTENTIVELY. "THE DOG WHOSE NAME'S CALLED, EATS."

more watchful and suspicious, and she soon observed that, whenever they halted to perform outside a village alehouse or other place, Mr. Codlin, while he went through his share of the entertainments, kept his eye steadily upon her and the old man, or with a show of great friendship and consideration invited the latter to lean upon his arm, and so held him tight until the representation was over and they again went forward. Even Short seemed to change in this

respect, and to mingle with his good-nature something of a desire to keep them in safe custody. This increased the child's misgivings, and made her yet more anxious and uneasy.

Meanwhile they were drawing near the town where the races were to begin next day; for, from passing numerous groups of gipsies and trampers on the road, wending their way towards it, and straggling out from every by-way and cross-country lane, they gradually fell into a



stream of people, some walking by the side of covered carts, others with horses, others with donkeys, others toiling on with heavy loads upon their backs, but all tending to the same point. The public-houses by the wayside, from being empty and noiseless as those in the remoter parts had been, now sent out boisterous shouts and clouds of smoke; and, from the misty windows, clusters of broad red faces looked down upon the road. On every piece of waste or common ground, some small gambler drove his noisy trade, and bellowed to the idle passers-by to stop and try their chance; the crowd grew thicker and more noisy; gilt gingerbread in blanket-stalls exposed its glories to the dust; and often a four-horse carriage, dashing by, obscured all objects in the gritty cloud it raised, and left them, stunned and blinded, far behind.

It was dark before they reached the town itself, and long indeed the few last miles had been. Here all was tumult and confusion; the streets were filled with throngs of people—many strangers were there, it seemed, by the looks they cast about—the church bells rang out their noisy peals, and flags streamed from windows and housetops. In the large inn yards waiters flitted to and fro and ran against each other, horses clattered on the uneven stones, carriage steps fell rattling down, and sickening smells from many dinners came in a heavy lukewarm breath upon the sense. In the smaller public-houses, fiddles with all their might and main were squeaking out the tune to staggering feet; drunken men, oblivious of the burden of their song, joined in a senseless howl, which drowned the tinkling of the feeble bell, and made them savage for their drink; vagabond groups assembled round the doors to see the stroller woman dance, and add their uproar to the shrill flageolet and deafening drum.

Through this delirious scene, the child, frightened and repelled by all she saw, led on her bewildered charge, clinging close to her conductor, and trembling lest in the press she should be separated from him and left to find her way alone. Quickening their steps to get clear of all the roar and riot, they at length passed through the town, and made for the race-course, which was upon an open heath, situated on an eminence, a full mile distant from its furthest bounds.

Although there were many people here, none of the best favoured or best clad, busily erecting tents and driving stakes into the ground, and hurrying to and fro with dusty feet and many a grumbled oath—although there were tired children cradled on heaps of straw between the

wheels of carts, crying themselves to sleep—and poor lean horses and donkeys just turned loose, grazing among the men and women, and pots and kettles, and half-lighted fires, and ends of candles flaring and wasting in the air—for all this, the child felt it an escape from the town, and drew her breath more freely. After a scanty supper, the purchase of which reduced her little stock so low, that she had only a few halfpence with which to buy a breakfast on the morrow, she and the old man lay down to rest in a corner of a tent, and slept, despite the busy preparations that were going on around them all night long.

And now they had come to the time when they must beg their bread. Soon after sunrise in the morning she stole out from the tent, and rambling into some fields at a short distance, plucked a few wild roses and such humble flowers, purposing to make them into little nosegays, and offer them to the ladies in the carriages when the company arrived. Her thoughts were not idle while she was thus employed. When she returned and was seated beside the old man in one corner of the tent, tying her flowers together, while the two men lay dozing in another corner, she plucked him by the sleeve, and, slightly glancing towards them, said in a low voice:

“Grandfather, don’t look at those I talk of, and don’t seem as if I spoke of anything but what I am about. What was that you told me before we left the old house? That if they knew what we were going to do, they would say that you were mad, and part us?”

The old man turned to her with an aspect of wild terror; but she checked him by a look, and bidding him hold some flowers, while she tied them up, and so bringing her lips closer to his ear, said:

“I know that was what you told me. You needn’t speak, dear. I recollect it very well. It was not likely that I should forget it. Grandfather, these men suspect that we have secretly left our friends, and mean to carry us before some gentleman, and have us taken care of and sent back. If you let your hand tremble so, we can never get away from them, but, if you’re only quiet now, we shall do so easily.”

“How?” muttered the old man. “Dear Nelly, how? They will shut me up in a stone room, dark and cold, and chain me up to the wall, Nell—flog me with whips, and never let me see thee more!”

“You’re trembling again,” said the child. “Keep close to me all day. Never mind them, don’t look at them, but me. I shall find a time

when we can steal away. When I do, mind you come with me, and do not stop or speak a word. Hush! That's all."

"Halloa! what are you up to, my dear?" said Mr. Codlin, raising his head, and yawning. Then, observing that his companion was fast asleep, he added in an earnest whisper, "Codlin's the friend, remember—not Short."

"Making some nosegays," the child replied; "I am going to try and sell some, these three days of the races. Will you have one—as a present I mean?"

Mr. Codlin would have risen to receive it, but the child hurried towards him and placed it in his hand. He stuck it in his button-hole with an air of ineffable complacency for a misanthrope, and, leering exultingly at the unconscious Short, muttered, as he laid himself down again, "Tom Codlin's the friend, by G—!"

As the morning wore on, the tents assumed a gayer and more brilliant appearance, and long lines of carriages came rolling softly on the turf. Men who had lounged about all night in smock-frocks and leather leggings came out in silken vests and hats and plumes, as jugglers or mountebanks; or in gorgeous liveries as soft-spoken servants at gambling booths; or in sturdy yeoman dress as decoys at unlawful games. Black-eyed gipsy girls, hooded in showy handkerchiefs, sallied forth to tell fortunes, and pale slender women with consumptive faces lingered upon the footsteps of ventriloquists and conjurers, and counted the sixpences with anxious eyes long before they were gained. As many of the children as could be kept within bounds were stowed away, with all the other signs of dirt and poverty, among the donkeys, carts, and horses; and as many as could not be thus disposed of ran in and out in all intricate spots, crept between people's legs and carriage wheels, and came forth unharmed from under horses' hoofs. The dancing dogs, the stilts, the little lady and the tall man, and all the other attractions, with organs out of number and bands innumerable, emerged from the holes and corners in which they had passed the night, and flourished boldly in the sun.

Along the uncleared course Short led his party, sounding the brazen trumpet, and reveling in the voice of Punch; and at his heels went Thomas Codlin, bearing the show as usual, and keeping his eye on Nelly and her grandfather, as they rather lingered in the rear. The child bore upon her arm the little basket with her flowers, and sometimes stopped, with timid and modest looks, to offer them at some gay carriage; but alas! there were many bolder

beggars there, gipsies who promised husbands, and other adepts in their trade, and although some ladies smiled gently as they shook their heads, and others cried to the gentlemen beside them, "See, what a pretty face!" they let the pretty face pass on, and never thought that it looked tired or hungry.

There was but one lady who seemed to understand the child, and she was one who sat alone in a handsome carriage, while two young men in dashing clothes, who had just dismounted from it, talked and laughed loudly at a little distance, appearing to forget her quite. There were many ladies all around, but they turned their backs, or looked another way, or at the two young men (not unfavourably at *them*), and left her to herself. She motioned away a gipsy woman urgent to tell her fortune, saying that it was told already, and had been for some years, but called the child towards her, and, taking her flowers, put money into her trembling hand, and bade her go home and keep at home for God's sake.

Many a time they went up and down those long long lines, seeing everything but the horses and the race; when the bell rung to clear the course, going back to rest among the carts and donkeys, and not coming out again until the heat was over. Many a time, too, was Punch displayed in the full zenith of his humour, but all this while the eye of Thomas Codlin was upon them, and to escape without notice was impracticable.

At length, late in the day, Mr. Codlin pitched the show in a convenient spot, and the spectators were soon in the very triumph of the scene. The child, sitting down with the old man close behind it, had been thinking how strange it was that horses who were such fine honest creatures should seem to make vagabonds of all the men they drew about them, when a loud laugh at some extemporaneous witticism of Mr. Short's, having allusion to the circumstances of the day, roused her from her meditation and caused her to look around.

If they were ever to get away unseen, that was the very moment. Short was plying the quarter-staves vigorously, and knocking the characters in the fury of the combat against the sides of the show, the people were looking on with laughing faces, and Mr. Codlin had relaxed into a grim smile as his roving eye detected hands going into waistcoat pockets, and groping secretly for sixpences. If they were ever to get away unseen, that was the very moment. They seized it, and fled.

They made a path through booths and carriages and throngs of people, and never once



stopped to look behind. The bell was ringing and the course was cleared by the time they reached the ropes, but they dashed across it, insensible to the shouts and screeching that assailed them for breaking in upon its sanctity, and, creeping under the brow of the hill at a quick pace, made for the open fields.

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CHAPTER XX.

**D**AY after day as he bent his steps homeward, returning from some new effort to procure employment, Kit raised his eyes to the window of the little room he had so much commended to the child, and hoped to see some indication of her presence. His own earnest wish, coupled with the assurance he had received from Quilp, filled him with the belief that she would yet arrive to claim the humble shelter he had offered, and from the death of each day's hope, another hope sprung up to live to-morrow.

"I think they must certainly come to-morrow, eh, mother?" said Kit, laying aside his hat with a weary air, and sighing as he spoke. "They have been gone a week. They surely couldn't stop away more than a week, could they now?"

The mother shook her head, and reminded him how often he had been disappointed already.

"For the matter of that," said Kit, "you speak true and sensible enough, as you always do, mother. Still, I do consider that a week is quite long enough for 'em to be rambling about; don't you say so?"

"Quite long enough, Kit, longer than enough, but they may not come back for all that."

Kit was for a moment disposed to be vexed by this contradiction, and not the less so from having anticipated it in his own mind, and knowing how just it was. But the impulse was only momentary, and the vexed look became a kind one before it had crossed the room.

"Then what do you think, mother, has become of 'em? You don't think they've gone to sea, anyhow?"

"Not gone for sailors, certainly," returned the mother with a smile. "But I can't help thinking that they have gone to some foreign country."

"I say," cried Kit with a rueful face, "don't talk like that, mother."

"I am afraid they have, and that's the truth," she said. "It's the talk of all the neighbours, and there are some even that know of their having been seen on board ship, and can tell

you the name of the place they've gone to, which is more than I can, my dear, for it's a very hard one."

"I don't believe it," said Kit. "Not a word of it. A set of idle chatterboxes, how should they know?"

"They may be wrong, of course," returned the mother. "I can't tell about that, though I don't think it's at all unlikely that they're in the right, for the talk is that the old gentleman had put by a little money that nobody knew of, not even that ugly little man you talk to me about—what's his name?—Quilp; and that he and Miss Nell have gone to live abroad, where it can't be taken from them, and they will never be disturbed. That don't seem very far out of the way now, do it?"

Kit scratched his head mournfully, in reluctant admission that it did not, and clambering up to the old nail, took down the cage and set himself to clean it and to feed the bird. His thoughts reverting from this occupation to the little old gentleman who had given him the shilling, he suddenly recollected that that was the very day—nay, nearly the very hour—at which the little old gentleman had said he should be at the notary's house again. He no sooner remembered this than he hung up the cage with great precipitation, and hastily explaining the nature of his errand, went off at full speed to the appointed place.

It was some two minutes after the time when he reached the spot, which was a considerable distance from his home, but by great good luck the little old gentleman had not yet arrived; at least there was no pony-chaise to be seen, and it was not likely that he had come and gone again in so short a space. Greatly relieved to find that he was not too late, Kit leant against a lamp-post to take breath, and waited the advent of the pony and his charge.

Sure enough, before long the pony came trotting round the corner of the street, looking as obstinate as pony might, and picking his steps as if he were spying about for the cleanest places, and would by no means dirty his feet or hurry himself inconveniently. Behind the pony sat the little old gentleman, and by the old gentleman's side sat the little old lady, carrying just such a nosegay as she had brought before.

The old gentleman, the old lady, the pony, and the chaise came up the street in perfect unanimity, until they arrived within some half-a-dozen doors of the notary's house, when the pony, deceived by a brass plate beneath a tailor's knocker, came to a halt, and maintained by a sturdy silence that that was the house they wanted.

"Now, sir, will you have the goodness to go on? This is *not* the place," said the old gentleman.

The pony looked with great attention into a fire-plug which was near him, and appeared to be quite absorbed in contemplating it.

"Oh dear, such a naughty Whisker!" cried the old lady. "After being so good too, and coming along so well! I am quite ashamed of him. I don't know what we are to do with him, I really don't."

The pony, having thoroughly satisfied himself as to the nature and properties of the fire-plug, looked into the air after his old enemies the flies, and as there happened to be one of them tickling his ear at that moment, he shook his head and whisked his tail, after which he appeared full of thought, but quite comfortable and collected. The old gentleman, having exhausted his powers of persuasion, alighted to lead him; whereupon the pony, perhaps because he held this to be a sufficient concession, per-



"THERE WAS BUT ONE LADY WHO SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND THE CHILD, AND SHE WAS ONE WHO SAT ALONE IN A HANDSOME CARRIAGE."

haps because he happened to catch sight of the other brass plate, or perhaps because he was in a spiteful humour, darted off with the old lady, and stopped at the right house, leaving the old gentleman to come panting on behind.

It was then that Kit presented himself at the pony's head, and touched his hat with a smile.

"Why, bless me," cried the old gentleman, "the lad *is* here! My dear, do you see?"

"I said I'd be here, sir," said Kit, patting Whisker's neck. "I hope you've had a pleasant ride, sir. He's a very nice little pony."

"My dear!" said the old gentleman. "This is an uncommon lad! a good lad, I'm sure."

"I'm sure he is," rejoined the old lady. "A very good lad, and I'm sure he is a good son."

Kit acknowledged these expressions of confidence by touching his hat again, and blushing very much. The old gentleman then handed the old lady out, and after looking at him with an approving smile, they went into the house—talking about him as they went, Kit could not help feeling. Presently Mr. Witherden, smelling very hard at the nosegay, came to the window



and looked at him, and after that Mr. Abel came and looked at him, and after that the old gentleman and lady came and looked at him again, and after that they all came and looked at him together, which Kit, feeling very much embarrassed by, made a pretence of not observing. Therefore he patted the pony more and more; and this liberty the pony most handsomely permitted.

The faces had not disappeared from the window many moments, when Mr. Chuckster in his official coat, and with his hat hanging on his head just as it happened to fall from its peg, appeared upon the pavement, and telling him he was wanted inside, bade him go in, and he would mind the chaise the while. In giving him this direction Mr. Chuckster remarked that he wished that he might be blessed if he could make out whether he (Kit) was "precious raw" or "precious deep," but intimated, by a distrustful shake of the head, that he inclined to the latter opinion.

Kit entered the office in a great tremor, for he was not used to going among strange ladies and gentlemen, and the tin boxes and bundles of dusty papers had in his eyes an awful and venerable air. Mr. Witherden, too, was a bustling gentleman, who talked loud and fast, and all eyes were upon him, and he was very shabby.

"Well, boy," said Mr. Witherden, "you came to work out that shilling;—not to get another, hey?"

"No indeed, sir," replied Kit, taking courage to look up. "I never thought of such a thing."

"Father alive?" said the notary.

"Dead, sir."

"Mother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Married again—eh?"

Kit made answer, not without some indignation, that she was a widow with three children, and that as to her marrying again, if the gentleman knew her he wouldn't think of such a thing. At this reply Mr. Witherden buried his nose in the flowers again, and whispered behind the nosegay to the old gentleman that he believed the lad was as honest a lad as need be.

"Now," said Mr. Garland when they had made some further inquiries of him, "I am not going to give you anything——"

"Thank you, sir," Kit replied; and quite seriously too, for this announcement seemed to free him from the suspicion which the notary had hinted.

"—But," resumed the old gentleman, "perhaps I may want to know something more about

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you, so tell me where you live, and I'll put it down in my pocket-book."

Kit told him, and the old gentleman wrote down the address with his pencil. He had scarcely done so, when there was a great uproar in the street, and the old lady, hurrying to the window, cried that Whisker had run away, upon which Kit darted out to the rescue, and the others followed.

It seemed that Mr. Chuckster had been standing with his hands in his pockets looking carelessly at the pony, and occasionally insulting him with such admonitions as "Stand still,"—"Be quiet,"—"Woa-a-a!" and the like, which by a pony of spirit cannot be borne. Consequently, the pony being deterred by no considerations of duty or obedience, and not having before him the slightest fear of the human eye, had at length started off, and was at that moment rattling down the street,—Mr. Chuckster, with his hat off and a pen behind his ear, hanging on in the rear of the chaise, and making futile attempts to draw it the other way, to the unspeakable admiration of all beholders. Even in running away, however, Whisker was perverse, for he had not gone very far when he suddenly stopped, and before assistance could be rendered, commenced backing at nearly as quick a pace as he had gone forward. By these means Mr. Chuckster was pushed and hustled to the office again in a most inglorious manner, and arrived in a state of great exhaustion and discomfiture.

The old lady then stepped into her seat, and Mr. Abel (whom they had come to fetch) into his. The old gentleman, after reasoning with the pony on the extreme impropriety of his conduct, and making the best amends in his power to Mr. Chuckster, took his place also, and they drove away, waving a farewell to the notary and his clerk, and more than once turning to nod kindly to Kit as he watched them from the road.

## CHAPTER XXI.

**K**IT turned away, and very soon forgot the pony, and the chaise, and the little old lady, and the little old gentleman, and the little young gentleman to boot, in thinking what could have become of his late master and his lovely grandchild, who were the fountain-head of all his meditations. Still casting about for some plausible means of accounting for their non-appearance, and of per-

suading himself that they must soon return, he bent his steps towards home, intending to finish the task which the sudden recollection of his contract had interrupted, and then to sally forth once more to seek his fortune for the day.

When he came to the corner of the court in which he lived, lo and behold there was the pony again! Yes, there he was, looking more obstinate than ever; and, alone in the chaise, keeping a steady watch upon his every wink, sat Mr. Abel, who, lifting up his eyes by chance and seeing Kit pass by, nodded to him as though he would have nodded his head off.

Kit wondered to see the pony again, so near his own home too, but it never occurred to him for what purpose the pony might have come there, or where the old lady and the old gentleman had gone, until he lifted the latch of the door, and walking in, found them seated in the room in conversation with his mother, at which unexpected sight he pulled off his hat and made his best bow in some confusion.

"We are here before you, you see, Christopher," said Mr. Garland, smiling.

"Yes, sir," said Kit; and, as he said it, he looked towards his mother for an explanation of the visit.

"The gentleman's been kind enough, my dear," said she in reply to this mute interrogation, "to ask me whether you were in a good place, or in any place at all, and when I told him no, you were not in any, he was so good as to say that——"

"That we wanted a good lad in our house," said the old gentleman and the old lady both together, "and that perhaps we might think of it, if we found everything as we would wish it to be."

As this thinking of it plainly meant the thinking of engaging Kit, he immediately partook of his mother's anxiety, and fell into a great flutter; for the little old couple were very methodical and cautious, and asked so many questions that he began to be afraid there was no chance of his success.

"You see, my good woman," said Mrs. Garland to Kit's mother, "that it's necessary to be very careful and particular in such a matter as this, for we're only three in family, and are very quiet regular folks, and it would be a sad thing if we made any kind of mistake, and found things different from what we hoped and expected."

To this Kit's mother replied that certainly it was quite true, and quite right, and quite proper, and Heaven forbid that she should shrink, or have cause to shrink, from any inquiry into her character, or that of her son, who was a very

good son, though she was his mother, in which respect, she was bold to say, he took after his father, who was not only a good son to *his* mother, but the best of husbands and the best of fathers besides, which Kit could and would corroborate she knew, and so would little Jacob and the baby likewise if they were old enough, which unfortunately they were not, though, as they didn't know what a loss they had had, perhaps it was a great deal better that they should be as young as they were; and so Kit's mother wound up a long story by wiping her eyes with her apron, and patting little Jacob's head, who was rocking the cradle and staring with all his might at the strange lady and gentleman.

When Kit's mother had done speaking the old lady struck in again, and said that she was quite sure she was a very honest and very respectable person, or she never would have expressed herself in that manner, and that certainly the appearance of the children and the cleanliness of the house deserved great praise, and did her the utmost credit, whereat Kit's mother dropped a curtsy and became consoled. Then the good woman entered into a long and minute account of Kit's life and history from the earliest period down to that time, not omitting to make mention of his miraculous fall out of a back-parlour window when an infant of tender years, or his uncommon sufferings in a state of measles, which were illustrated by correct imitations of the plaintive manner in which he called for toast-and-water day and night, and said "Don't cry, mother, I shall soon be better;" for proof of which statements reference was made to Mrs. Green, lodger, at the cheesemonger's round the corner, and divers other ladies and gentlemen in various parts of England and Wales (and one Mr. Brown, who was supposed to be then a corporal in the East Indies, and who could of course be found with very little trouble), within whose personal knowledge the circumstances had occurred. This narration ended, Mr. Garland put some questions to Kit respecting his qualifications and general acquirements, while Mrs. Garland noticed the children, and hearing from Kit's mother certain remarkable circumstances which had attended the birth of each, related certain other remarkable circumstances which had attended the birth of her own son, Mr. Abel, from which it appeared that both Kit's mother and herself had been, above and beyond all other women of what condition or age soever, peculiarly hemmed in with perils and dangers. Lastly, inquiry was made into the nature and extent of Kit's wardrobe, and a small advance being made to improve the same, he was formally hired at an



annual income of Six Pounds, over and above his board and lodging, by Mr. and Mrs. Garland, of Abel Cottage, Finchley.

It would be difficult to say which party appeared most pleased with this arrangement, the conclusion of which was hailed with nothing but pleasant looks and cheerful smiles on both sides. It was settled that Kit should repair to his new abode on the next day but one, in the morning; and finally, the little old couple, after bestowing a bright half-crown on little Jacob and another on the baby, took their leaves; being escorted as far as the street by their new attendant, who held the obdurate pony by the bridle while they took their seats, and saw them drive away with a lightened heart.

"Well, mother," said Kit, hurrying back into the house, "I think my fortune's about made now."

"I should think it was indeed, Kit," rejoined his mother. "Six pound a year! Only think!"

"Ah!" said Kit, trying to maintain the gravity which the consideration of such a sum demanded, but grinning with delight in spite of himself. "There's a property!"

Kit drew a long breath when he had said this, and putting his hands deep into his pockets as if there were one year's wages at least in each, looked at his mother as though he saw through her, and down an immense perspective of sovereignties beyond.

"Please God we'll make such a lady of you for Sundays, mother! such a scholar of Jacob, such a child of the baby, such a room of the one up-stairs! Six pound a year!"

"Hem!" croaked a strange voice. "What's that about six pound a year? What about six pound a year?" And as the voice made this inquiry, Daniel Quilp walked in, with Richard Swiveller at his heels.

"Who said he was to have six pound a year?" said Quilp, looking sharply round. "Did the old man say it, or did little Nell say it? And what's he to have it for, and where are they, eh?"

The good woman was so much alarmed by the sudden apparition of this unknown piece of ugliness, that she hastily caught the baby from its cradle, and retreated into the furthest corner of the room; while little Jacob, sitting on his stool with his hands on his knees, looked full at him in a species of fascination, roaring lustily all the time. Richard Swiveller took an easy observation of the family over Mr. Quilp's head, and Quilp himself, with his hands in his pockets, smiled in an exquisite enjoyment of the commotion he occasioned.

"Don't be frightened, mistress," said Quilp

after a pause. "Your son knows me; I don't eat babies; I don't like 'em. It will be as well to stop that young screamer, though, in case I should be tempted to do him a mischief. Holloa, sir! Will you be quiet?"

Little Jacob stemmed the course of two tears which he was squeezing out of his eyes, and instantly subsided into a silent horror.

"Mind you don't break out again, you villain," said Quilp, looking sternly at him, "or I'll make faces at you, and throw you into fits, I will. Now, you sir, why haven't you been to me as you promised?"

"What should I come for?" retorted Kit. "I hadn't any business with you, no more than you had with me."

"Here, mistress," said Quilp, turning quickly away, and appealing from Kit to his mother. "When did his old master come or send here last? Is he here now? If not, where's he gone?"

"He has not been here at all," she replied. "I wish we knew where they have gone, for it would make my son a good deal easier in his mind, and me too. If you're the gentleman named Mr. Quilp, I should have thought you'd have known, and so I told him only this very day."

"Humph!" muttered Quilp, evidently disappointed to believe that this was true. "That's what you tell this gentleman too, is it?"

"If the gentleman comes to ask the same question, I can't tell him anything else, sir; and I only wish I could, for our own sakes," was the reply.

Quilp glanced at Richard Swiveller, and observed that having met him on the threshold, he assumed that he had come in search of some intelligence of the fugitives. He supposed he was right?

"Yes," said Dick, "that was the object of the present expedition. I fancied it possible—but let us go ring fancy's knell. I'll begin it."

"You seem disappointed," observed Quilp.

"A baffler, sir, a baffler, that's all," returned Dick. "I have entered upon a speculation which has proved a baffler; and a Being of brightness and beauty will be offered up a sacrifice at Cheggs's altar. That's all, sir."

The dwarf eyed Richard with a sarcastic smile, but Richard, who had been taking a rather strong lunch with a friend, observed him not, and continued to deplore his fate with mournful and despondent looks. Quilp plainly discerned that there was some secret reason for this visit and his uncommon disappointment, and, in the hope there might be means of mis-

chief lurking beneath it, resolved to worm it out. He had no sooner adopted this resolution, than he conveyed as much honesty into his face as it was capable of expressing, and sympathised with Mr. Swiveller exceedingly.

"I'm disappointed myself," said Quilp, "out of mere friendly feeling for them; but you have real reasons, private reasons I have no doubt, for your disappointment, and therefore it comes heavier than mine."

"Why, of course it does," Dick observed testily.

"Upon my word, I'm very sorry, very sorry. I'm rather cast down myself. As we are companions in adversity, shall we be companions in the surest way of forgetting it? If you had no particular business, now, to lead you in another direction," urged Quilp, plucking him by the sleeve, and looking slyly up into his face out of the corners of his eyes, "there is a house by the water-side where they have some of the noblest Schiedam—reputed to be smuggled, but that's between ourselves—that can be got in all the world. The landlord knows me. There's a little summer-house overlooking the river, where we might take a glass of this delicious liquor with a whiff of the best tobacco—it's in this case, and of the rarest quality, to my certain knowledge—and be perfectly snug and happy, could we possibly contrive it; or is there any very particular engagement that peremptorily takes you another way, Mr. Swiveller, eh?"

As the dwarf spoke, Dick's face relaxed into a compliant smile, and his eyebrows slowly un-bent. By the time he had finished, Dick was looking down at Quilp in the same sly manner as Quilp was looking up at him, and there remained nothing more to be done but to set out for the house in question. This they did straightway. The moment their backs were turned, little Jacob thawed, and resumed his crying from the point where Quilp had frozen him.

The summer-house of which Mr. Quilp had spoken was a rugged wooden box, rotten and bare to see, which overhung the river's mud, and threatened to slide down into it. The tavern to which it belonged was a crazy building, sapped and undermined by the rats, and only upheld by great bars of wood which were reared against its walls, and had propped it up so long that even they were decaying and yielding with their load, and of a windy night might be heard to creak and crack as if the whole fabric were about to come toppling down. The house stood—if anything so old and feeble could be said to stand—on a piece of waste ground, blighted with the unwholesome smoke of factory chimneys, and

echoing the clank of iron wheels and rush of troubled water. Its internal accommodations amply fulfilled the promise of the outside. The rooms were low and damp, the clammy walls were pierced with chinks and holes, the rotten floors had sunk from their level, the very beams started from their places and warned the timid stranger from their neighbourhood.

To this inviting spot, entreating him to observe its beauties as they passed along, Mr. Quilp led Richard Swiveller, and on the table of the summer-house, scored deep with many a gallows and initial letter, there soon appeared a wooden keg, full of the vaunted liquor. Drawing it off into the glasses with the skill of a practised hand, and mixing it with about a third part of water, Mr. Quilp assigned to Richard Swiveller his portion, and lighting his pipe from an end of a candle in a very old and battered lantern, drew himself together upon a seat and puffed away.

"Is it good?" said Quilp as Richard Swiveller smacked his lips, "is it strong and fiery? Does it make you wink and choke, and your eyes water, and your breath come short—does it?"

"Does it?" cried Dick, throwing away part of the contents of his glass, and filling it up with water. "Why, man, you don't mean to tell me that you drink such fire as this?"

"No!" rejoined Quilp. "Not drink it! Look here. And here. And here, again. Not drink it!"

As he spoke, Daniel Quilp drew off and drank three small glassfuls of the raw spirit, and then with a horrible grimace took a great many pulls at his pipe, and swallowing the smoke, discharged it in a heavy cloud from his nose. This feat accomplished, he drew himself together in his former position, and laughed excessively.

"Give us a toast!" cried Quilp, rattling on the table in a dexterous manner with his fist and elbow alternately, in a kind of tune, "a woman, a beauty. Let's have a beauty for our toast, and empty our glasses to the last drop. Her name, come!"

"If you want a name," said Dick, "here's Sophy Wackles."

"Sophy Wackles," screamed the dwarf, "Miss Sophy Wackles that is—Mrs. Richard Swiveller that shall be—that shall be—ha, ha, ha!"

"Ah!" said Dick, "you might have said that a few weeks ago, but it won't do now, my buck. Immolating herself upon the shrine of Cheggs—"

"Poison Cheggs, cut Cheggs's ears off," rejoined Quilp. "I won't hear of Cheggs. Her name is Swiveller or nothing. I'll drink her



health again, and her father's and her mother's; and to all her sisters and brothers—the glorious family of the Wackleses—all the Wackleses in one glass—down with it to the dregs!”

“Well,” said Richard Swiveller, stopping short in the act of raising the glass to his lips, and looking at the dwarf in a species of stupor as he flourished his arms and legs about; “you’re a jolly fellow, but of all the jolly fellows I ever saw or heard of, you have the queerest and most extraordinary way with you, upon my life you have.”

This candid declaration tended rather to increase than restrain Mr. Quilp’s eccentricities, and Richard Swiveller, astonished to see him in such a roystering vein, and drinking not a little himself, for company, began imperceptibly to become more companionable and confiding, so that, being judiciously led on by Mr. Quilp, he grew at last very confiding indeed. Having once got him into this mood, and knowing now the key-note to strike whenever he was at a loss, Daniel Quilp’s task was comparatively an easy one, and he was soon in possession of the whole details of the scheme contrived between the easy Dick and his more designing friend.

“Stop!” said Quilp. “That’s the thing, that’s the thing. It can be brought about, it shall be brought about. There’s my hand upon it; I’m your friend from this minute.”

“What! do you think there’s still a chance?” inquired Dick, in surprise at this encouragement.

“A chance!” echoed the dwarf, “a certainty! Sophy Wackles may become a Cheggs, or anything else she likes, but not a Swiveller. Oh, you lucky dog! He’s richer than any Jew alive; you’re a made man. I see in you now nothing but Nelly’s husband, rolling in gold and silver. I’ll help you. It shall be done. Mind my words, it shall be done.”

“But how?” said Dick.

“There’s plenty of time,” rejoined the dwarf, “and it shall be done. We’ll sit down and talk it over again all the way through. Fill your glass while I’m gone. I shall be back directly—directly.”

With these hasty words, Daniel Quilp withdrew into a dismantled skittle-ground behind the public-house, and, throwing himself upon the ground, actually screamed and rolled about in uncontrollable delight.

“Here’s sport!” he cried, “sport ready to my hand, all invented and arranged, and only to be enjoyed. It was this shallow-pated fellow who made my bones ache t’other day, was it? It was his friend and fellow-plotter, Mr. Trent, that

once made eyes at Mrs. Quilp, and leered and looked, was it? After labouring for two or three years in their precious scheme, to find that they’ve got a beggar at last, and one of them tied for life. Ha, ha, ha! He shall marry Nell. He shall have her, and I’ll be the first man, when the knot’s tied hard and fast, to tell ’em what they’ve gained and what I’ve helped ’em to. Here will be a clearing of old scores, here will be a time to remind ’em what a capital friend I was, and how I helped ’em to the heiress. Ha, ha, ha!”

In the height of his ecstasy, Mr. Quilp had like to have met with a disagreeable check, for rolling very near a broken dog-kennel, there leaped forth a large fierce dog, who, but that his chain was of the shortest, would have given him a disagreeable salute. As it was, the dwarf remained upon his back in perfect safety, taunting the dog with hideous faces, and triumphing over him in his inability to advance another inch, though there were not a couple of feet between them.

“Why don’t you come and bite me, why don’t you come and tear me to pieces, you coward?” said Quilp, hissing and worrying the animal till he was nearly mad. “You’re afraid, you bully, you’re afraid, you know you are.”

The dog tore and strained at his chain with starting eyes and furious bark, but there the dwarf lay, snapping his fingers with gestures of defiance and contempt. When he had sufficiently recovered from his delight, he rose, and with his arms a-kimbo, achieved a kind of demon-dance round the kennel, just without the limits of the chain, driving the dog quite wild. Having by this means composed his spirits and put himself in a pleasant train, he returned to his unsuspecting companion, whom he found looking at the tide with exceeding gravity, and thinking of that same gold and silver which Mr. Quilp had mentioned.

## CHAPTER XXII.

**T**HE remainder of that day and the whole of the next were a busy time for the Nubbles family, to whom everything connected with Kit’s outfit and departure was matter of as great moment as if he had been about to penetrate into the interior of Africa, or to take a cruise round the world. It would be difficult to suppose that there ever was a box which was opened and shut so many times within four-and-twenty hours as that which con-

tained his wardrobe and necessaries; and certainly there never was one which to two small eyes presented such a mine of clothing as this mighty chest, with its three shirts and proportionate allowance of stockings and pocket-handkerchiefs, disclosed to the astonished vision of little Jacob. At last it was conveyed to the carrier's, at whose house at Finchley, Kit was to find it next day; and the box being gone, there remained but two questions for consideration: firstly, whether the carrier would lose, or dishonestly feign to lose, the box upon the road; and secondly, whether Kit's mother perfectly understood how to take care of herself in the absence of her son.

"I don't think there's hardly a chance of his really losing it, but carriers are under great temptation to pretend they lose things, no doubt," said Mrs. Nubbles apprehensively, in reference to the first point.

"No doubt about it," returned Kit with a serious look; "upon my word, mother, I don't think it was right to trust it to itself. Somebody ought to have gone with it, I'm afraid."

"We can't help it now," said his mother; "but it was foolish and wrong. People oughtn't to be tempted."

Kit inwardly resolved that he would never tempt a carrier any more, save with an empty box; and, having formed this Christian determination, he turned his thoughts to the second question.

"You know you must keep up your spirits, mother, and not be lonesome because I'm not at home. I shall very often be able to look in when I come into town I dare say, and I shall send you a letter sometimes, and when the quarter comes round, I can get a holiday of course; and then see if we don't take little Jacob to the play, and let him know what oysters means."

"I hope plays mayn't be sinful, Kit, but I'm a'most afraid," said Mrs. Nubbles.

"I know who has been putting that in your head," rejoined her son disconsolately; "that's Little Bethel again. Now I say, mother, pray don't take to going there regularly, for if I was to see your good-humoured face, that has always made home cheerful, turned into a grievous one, and the baby trained to look grievous too, and to call itself a young sinner (bless its heart) and a child of the devil (which is calling its dead father names); if I was to see this, and see little Jacob looking grievous likewise, I should so take it to heart that I'm sure I should go and list for a soldier, and run my head on purpose against the first cannon-ball I saw coming my way."

"Oh, Kit, don't talk like that!"

"I would indeed, mother, and, unless you want to make me feel very wretched and uncomfortable, you'll keep that bow on your bonnet, which you'd more than half a mind to pull off last week. Can you suppose there's any harm in looking as cheerful and being as cheerful as our poor circumstances will permit? Do I see anything in the way I'm made, which calls upon me to be a snivelling, solemn, whispering chap, sneaking about as if I couldn't help it, and expressing myself in a most unpleasant snuffle? On the contrary, don't I see every reason why I shouldn't? Just hear this! Ha, ha, ha! An't that as nat'ral as walking, and as good for the health? Ha, ha, ha! An't that as nat'ral as a sheep's bleating, or a pig's grunting, or a horse's neighing, or a bird's singing? Ha, ha, ha! Isn't it, mother?"

There was something contagious in Kit's laugh, for his mother, who had looked grave before, first subsided into a smile, and then fell to joining in it heartily, which occasioned Kit to say that he knew it was natural, and to laugh the more. Kit and his mother, laughing together in a pretty loud key, woke the baby, who, finding that there was something very jovial and agreeable in progress, was no sooner in its mother's arms than it began to kick and laugh most vigorously. This new illustration of his argument so tickled Kit, that he fell backward in his chair in a state of exhaustion, pointing at the baby, and shaking his sides till he rocked again. After recovering twice or thrice, and as often relapsing, he wiped his eyes and said grace; and a very cheerful meal their scanty supper was.

With more kisses, and hugs, and tears than many young gentlemen who start upon their travels, and leave well-stocked homes behind them, would deem within the bounds of probability (if matter so low could be herein set down), Kit left the house at an early hour next morning, and set out to walk to Finchley; feeling a sufficient pride in his appearance to have warranted his excommunication from Little Bethel from that time forth, if he had ever been one of that mournful congregation.

Lest anybody should feel a curiosity to know how Kit was clad, it may be briefly remarked that he wore no livery, but was dressed in a coat of pepper-and-salt, with waistcoat of canary colour, and nether garments of iron grey; besides these glories, he shone in the lustre of a new pair of boots and an extremely stiff and shiny hat, which, on being struck anywhere with the knuckles, sounded like a drum. And in this



attire, rather wondering that he attracted so little attention, and attributing the circumstance to the insensibility of those who got up early, he made his way towards Abel Cottage.

Without encountering any more remarkable adventure on the road than meeting a lad in a brimless hat, the exact counterpart of his old one, on whom he bestowed half the sixpence he possessed, Kit arrived in course of time at the carrier's house, where, to the lasting honour of human nature, he found the box in safety. Receiving from the wife of this immaculate man a direction to Mr. Garland's, he took the box upon his shoulder and repaired thither directly.

To be sure, it was a beautiful little cottage with a thatched roof and little spires at the gable-ends, and pieces of stained glass in some of the windows, almost as large as pocket-books. On one side of the house was a little stable, just the size for the pony, with a little room over it, just the size for Kit. White curtains were fluttering, and birds in cages that looked as bright as if they were made of gold, were singing at the windows; plants were arranged on either side of the path, and clustered about the door; and the garden was bright with flowers in full bloom, which shed a sweet odour all round, and had a charming and elegant appearance. Everything, within the house and without, seemed to be the perfection of neatness and order. In the garden there was not a weed to be seen, and to judge from some dapper gardening tools, a basket, and a pair of gloves which were lying in one of the walks, old Mr. Garland had been at work in it that very morning.

Kit looked about him, and admired, and looked again, and this a great many times, before he could make up his mind to turn his head another way and ring the bell. There was abundance of time to look about him again, though, when he had rung it, for nobody came, so after ringing twice or thrice, he sat down upon his box, and waited.

He rung the bell a great many times, and yet nobody came. But at last, as he was sitting upon the box thinking about giants' castles, and princesses tied up to pegs by the hair of their heads, and dragons bursting out from behind gates, and other incidents of the like nature, common in story books to youths of low degree on their first visit to strange houses, the door was gently opened, and a little servant-girl, very tidy, modest, and demure, but very pretty too, appeared.

"I suppose you're Christopher, sir," said the servant-girl.

Kit got off the box, and said yes, he was.

"I'm afraid you've rung a good many times, perhaps," she rejoined, "but we couldn't hear you, because we've been catching the pony."

Kit rather wondered what this meant, but, as he couldn't stop there asking questions, he shouldered the box again and followed the girl into the hall, where, through a back-door, he descried Mr. Garland leading Whisker in triumph up the garden, after that self-willed pony had (as he afterwards learned) dodged the family round a small paddock in the rear for one hour and three-quarters.

The old gentleman received him very kindly, and so did the old lady, whose previous good opinion of him was greatly enhanced by his wiping his boots on the mat until the soles of his feet burnt again. He was then taken into the parlour to be inspected in his new clothes; and when he had been surveyed several times, and had afforded by his appearance unlimited satisfaction, he was taken into the stable (where the pony received him with uncommon complaisance); and thence into the little chamber he had already observed, which was very clean and comfortable; and thence into the garden, in which the old gentleman told him he would be taught to employ himself, and where he told him, besides, what great things he meant to do to make him comfortable and happy, if he found he deserved it. All these kindnesses Kit acknowledged with various expressions of gratitude, and so many touches of the new hat, that the brim suffered considerably. When the old gentleman had said all he had to say in the way of promise and advice, and Kit had said all he had to say in the way of assurance and thankfulness, he was handed over again to the old lady, who, summoning the little servant-girl (whose name was Barbara), instructed her to take him down-stairs and give him something to eat and drink, after his walk.

Down-stairs, therefore, Kit went; and at the bottom of the stairs there was such a kitchen as was never before seen or heard of out of a toy-shop window, with everything in it as bright and glowing, and as precisely ordered too, as Barbara herself. And in this kitchen Kit sat himself down at a table as white as a table-cloth, to eat cold meat, and drink small ale, and use his knife and fork the more awkwardly, because there was an unknown Barbara looking on and observing him.

It did not appear, however, that there was anything remarkably tremendous about this strange Barbara, who, having lived a very quiet life, blushed very much, and was quite as embarrassed and uncertain what she ought to say or

do as Kit could possibly be. When he had sat for some little time, attentive to the ticking of the sober clock, he ventured to glance curiously at the dresser, and there, among the plates and dishes, were Barbara's little workbox with a sliding lid to shut in the balls of cotton, and Barbara's Prayer-book, and Barbara's hymn-book, and Barbara's Bible. Barbara's little looking-glass hung in a good light near the window, and Barbara's bonnet was on a nail behind the door. From all these mute signs and tokens of her presence, he naturally glanced at Barbara herself, who sat as mute as they, shelling peas into a dish; and just when Kit was looking at her eyelashes, and wondering—quite in the simplicity of his heart—what colour her eyes might be, it perversely happened that Barbara raised her head a little to look at him, when both pair of eyes were hastily withdrawn, and Kit leant over his plate, and Barbara over her pea-shells, each in extreme confusion at having been detected by the other.

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### CHAPTER XXIII.

**M**R. RICHARD SWIVELLER, wending homewards from the Wilderness (for such was the appropriate name of Quilp's choice retreat), after a sinuous and cork-screw fashion, with many checks and stumbles; after stopping suddenly and staring about him, then as suddenly running forward for a few paces, and as suddenly halting again and shaking his head; doing everything with a jerk, and nothing by premeditation;—Mr. Richard Swiveller, wending his way homewards after this fashion, which is considered by evil-minded men to be symbolical of intoxication, and is not held by such persons to denote that state of deep wisdom and reflection in which the actor knows himself to be, began to think that possibly he had misplaced his confidence, and that the dwarf might not be precisely the sort of person to whom to intrust a secret of such delicacy and importance. And being led and tempted on by this remorseful thought into a condition which the evil-minded class before referred to would term the maudlin state or stage of drunkenness, it occurred to Mr. Swiveller to cast his hat upon the ground, and moan, crying aloud that he was an unhappy orphan, and that, if he had not been an unhappy orphan, things had never come to this.

“Left an infant by my parents at an early

age,” said Mr. Swiveller, bewailing his hard lot, “cast upon the world in my tenderest period, and thrown upon the mercies of a deluding dwarf, who can wonder at my weakness? Here's a miserable orphan for you. Here,” said Mr. Swiveller, raising his voice to a high pitch, and looking sleepily round, “is a miserable orphan!”

“Then,” said somebody hard by, “let me be a father to you.”

Mr. Swiveller swayed himself to and fro to preserve his balance, and, looking into a kind of haze which seemed to surround him, at last perceived two eyes dimly twinkling through the mist, which he observed, after a short time, were in the neighbourhood of a nose and mouth. Casting his eyes down towards that quarter in which, with reference to a man's face, his legs are usually to be found, he observed that the face had a body attached: and, when he looked more intently, he was satisfied that the person was Mr. Quilp, who indeed had been in his company all the time, but whom he had some vague idea of having left a mile or two behind.

“You have deceived an orphan, sir,” said Mr. Swiveller solemnly.

“I! I'm a second father to you,” replied Quilp.

“You my father, sir!” retorted Dick. “Being all right myself, sir, I request to be left alone—instantly, sir.”

“What a funny fellow you are!” cried Quilp.

“Go, sir,” returned Dick, leaning against a post and waving his hand. “Go, deceiver, go, some day, sir, p'raps you'll waken, from pleasure's dream to know, the grief of orphans forsaken. Will you go, sir?”

The dwarf taking no heed of this adjuration, Mr. Swiveller advanced with the view of inflicting upon him condign chastisement. But, forgetting his purpose or changing his mind before he came close to him, he seized his hand and vowed eternal friendship, declaring with an agreeable frankness that from that time forth they were brothers in everything but personal appearance. Then he told his secret all over again, with the addition of being pathetic on the subject of Miss Wackles, who, he gave Mr. Quilp to understand, was the occasion of any slight incoherency he might observe in his speech at that moment, which was attributable solely to the strength of his affection, and not to rosy wine or other fermented liquor. And then they went on arm-in-arm, very lovingly together.

“I'm as sharp,” said Quilp to him, at parting, “as sharp as a ferret, and as cunning as a weasel. You bring Trent to me; assure him that I'm his friend, though I fear he a little distrusts me (I



don't know why, I have not deserved it); and you've both of you made your fortunes—in perspective."

"That's the worst of it," returned Dick. "These fortunes in perspective look such a long way off."

"But they look smaller than they really are, on that account," said Quilp, pressing his arm. "You'll have no conception of the value of your prize until you draw close to it. Mark that."

"D'ye think not?" said Dick.

"Ay, I do; and I am certain of what I say,



"AND THEN THEY WENT ON ARM-IN-ARM, VERY LOVINGLY TOGETHER."

that's better," returned the dwarf. "You bring Trent to me. Tell him I am his friend and yours. Why shouldn't I be?"

"There's no reason why you shouldn't, certainly," replied Dick, "and perhaps there are a great many why you should—at least, there

would be nothing strange in your wanting to be my friend, if you were a choice spirit, but then you know you're *not* a choice spirit."

"I not a choice spirit!" cried Quilp.

"Devil a bit, sir," returned Dick. "A man of your appearance couldn't be. If you're any

spirit at all, sir, you're an evil spirit. Choice spirits," added Dick, smiting himself on the breast, "are quite a different-looking sort of people, you may take your oath of that, sir."

Quilp glanced at his free-spoken friend with a mingled expression of cunning and dislike, and, wringing his hand almost at the same moment, declared that he was an uncommon character, and had his warmest esteem. With that they parted; Mr. Swiveller to make the best of his way home and sleep himself sober; and Quilp to cogitate upon the discovery he had made, and exult in the prospect of the rich field of enjoyment and reprisal it opened to him.

It was not without great reluctance and misgiving that Mr. Swiveller, next morning, his head racked by the fumes of the renowned Schiedam, repaired to the lodging of his friend Trent (which was in the roof of an old house in an old ghostly inn), and recounted by very slow degrees what had yesterday taken place between him and Quilp. Nor was it without great surprise and much speculation on Quilp's probable motives, nor without many bitter comments on Dick Swiveller's folly, that his friend received the tale.

"I don't defend myself, Fred," said the penitent Richard; "but the fellow has such a queer way with him, and is such an artful dog, that first of all he set me upon thinking whether there was any harm in telling him, and while I was thinking, screwed it out of me. If you had seen him drink and smoke, as I did, you couldn't have kept anything from him. He's a Salamander, you know, that's what *he* is."

Without inquiring whether Salamanders were of necessity good confidential agents, or whether a fire-proof man was as a matter of course trustworthy, Frederick Trent threw himself into a chair, and, burying his head in his hands, endeavoured to fathom the motives which had led Quilp to insinuate himself into Richard Swiveller's confidence; for that the disclosure was of his seeking, and had not been spontaneously revealed by Dick, was sufficiently plain from Quilp's seeking his company and enticing him away.

The dwarf had twice encountered him when he was endeavouring to obtain intelligence of the fugitives. This, perhaps, as he had not shown any previous anxiety about them, was enough to awaken suspicion in the breast of a creature so jealous and distrustful by nature, setting aside any additional impulse to curiosity that he might have derived from Dick's incautious manner. But knowing the scheme they had planned, why should he offer to assist it?

This was a question more difficult of solution; but as knaves generally overreach themselves by imputing their own designs to others, the idea immediately presented itself that some circumstances of irritation between Quilp and the old man, arising out of their secret transactions, and not unconnected, perhaps, with his sudden disappearance, now rendered the former desirous of revenging himself upon him by seeking to entrap the sole object of his love and anxiety into a connection of which he knew he had a dread and hatred. As Frederick Trent himself, utterly regardless of his sister, had this object at heart, only second to the hope of gain, it seemed to him the more likely to be Quilp's main principle of action. Once investing the dwarf with a design of his own in abetting them, which the attainment of their purpose would serve, it was easy to believe him sincere and hearty in the cause; and as there could be no doubt of his proving a powerful and useful auxiliary, Trent determined to accept his invitation and go to his house that night, and if what he said and did confirmed him in the impression he had formed, to let him share the labour of their plan, but not the profit.

Having revolved these things in his mind and arrived at this conclusion, he communicated to Mr. Swiveller as much of his meditations as he thought proper (Dick would have been perfectly satisfied with less), and, giving him the day to recover himself from his late salamandering, accompanied him at evening to Mr. Quilp's house.

Mightily glad Mr. Quilp was to see them, or mightily glad he seemed to be; and fearfully polite Mr. Quilp was to Mrs. Quilp and Mrs. Jiniwin; and very sharp was the look he cast on his wife to observe how she was affected by the recognition of young Trent. Mrs. Quilp was as innocent as her own mother of any emotion, painful or pleasant, which the sight of him awakened, but as her husband's glance made her timid and confused, and uncertain what to do or what was required of her, Mr. Quilp did not fail to assign her embarrassment to the cause he had in his mind, and, while he chuckled at his penetration, was secretly exasperated by his jealousy.

Nothing of this appeared, however. On the contrary, Mr. Quilp was all blandness and suavity, and presided over the case-bottle of rum with extraordinary open-heartedness.

"Why, let me see," said Quilp. "It must be a matter of nearly two years since we were first acquainted."

"Nearer three, I think," said Trent.



"Nearer three!" cried Quilp. "How fast time flies! Does it seem as long as that to you, Mrs. Quilp?"

"Yes, I think it seems full three years, Quilp," was the unfortunate reply. "Oh indeed, ma'am," thought Quilp, "you have been pining, have you? Very good, ma'am."

"It seems to me but yesterday that you went out to Demerara in the *Mary Anne*," said Quilp; "but yesterday, I declare. Well, I like a little wildness. I was wild myself once."

Mr. Quilp accompanied this admission with such an awful wink, indicative of old rovings and backslidings, that Mrs. Jiniwin was indignant, and could not forbear from remarking under her breath that he might at least put off his confessions until his wife was absent; for which act of boldness and insubordination Mr. Quilp first stared her out of countenance, and then drank her health ceremoniously.

"I thought you'd come back directly, Fred. I always thought that," said Quilp, setting down his glass. "And when the *Mary Anne* returned with you on board, instead of a letter to say what a contrite heart you had, and how happy you were in the situation that had been provided for you, I was amused—exceedingly amused. Ha, ha, ha!"

The young man smiled, but not as though the theme was the most agreeable one that could have been selected for his entertainment; and for that reason Quilp pursued it.

"I always will say," he resumed, "that when a rich relation having two young people—sisters or brothers, or brother and sister—dependent on him, attaches himself exclusively to one, and casts off the other, he does wrong."

The young man made a movement of impatience, but Quilp went on as calmly as if he were discussing some abstract question in which nobody present had the slightest personal interest.

"It's very true," said Quilp, "that your grandfather urged repeated forgiveness, ingratitude, riot, and extravagance, and all that; but, as I told him, 'these are common faults.' 'But he's a scoundrel,' said he. 'Granting that,' said I (for the sake of argument, of course), 'a great many young noblemen and gentlemen are scoundrels too!' But he wouldn't be convinced."

"I wonder at that, Mr. Quilp," said the young man sarcastically.

"Well, so did I at the time," returned Quilp, "but he was always obstinate. He was in a manner a friend of mine, but he was always obstinate and wrong-headed. Little Nell is a

nice girl, a charming girl, but you're her brother, Frederick. You're her brother after all; as you told him the last time you met, he can't alter that."

"He would if he could, confound him for that and all other kindnesses," said the young man impatiently. "But nothing can come of this subject now, and let us have done with it in the devil's name."

"Agreed," returned Quilp, "agreed on my part readily. Why have I alluded to it? Just to show you, Frederick, that I have always stood your friend. You little knew who was your friend and who your foe; now did you? You thought I was against you, and so there has been a coolness between us; but it was all on your side, entirely on your side. Let's shake hands again, Fred."

With his head sunk down between his shoulders, and a hideous grin overspreading his face, the dwarf stood up and stretched his short arm across the table. After a moment's hesitation, the young man stretched out his to meet it; Quilp clutched his fingers in a grip that for the moment stopped the current of the blood within them, and pressing his other hand upon his lip, and frowning towards the unsuspecting Richard, released them and sat down.

This action was not lost upon Trent, who, knowing that Richard Swiveller was a mere tool in his hands, and knew no more of his designs than he thought proper to communicate, saw that the dwarf perfectly understood their relative position, and fully entered into the character of his friend. It is something to be appreciated, even in knavery. This silent homage to his superior abilities, no less than a sense of the power with which the dwarf's quick perception had already invested him, inclined the young man towards that ugly worthy, and determined him to profit by his aid.

It being now Mr. Quilp's cue to change the subject with all convenient expedition, lest Richard Swiveller in his heedlessness should reveal anything which it was inexpedient for the women to know, he proposed a game at four-handed cribbage; and partners being cut for, Mrs. Quilp fell to Frederick Trent, and Dick himself to Quilp. Mrs. Jiniwin, being very fond of cards, was carefully excluded by her son-in-law from any participation in the game, and had assigned to her the duty of occasionally replenishing the glasses from the case-bottle; Mr. Quilp from that moment keeping one eye constantly upon her, lest she should by any means procure a taste of the same, and thereby tantalising the wretched old lady (who was as much attached to

the case-bottle as the cards) in a double degree and most ingenious manner.

But it was not to Mrs. Jiniwin alone that Mr. Quilp's attention was restricted, as several other matters required his constant vigilance. Among his various eccentric habits he had a humorous one of always cheating at cards, which rendered necessary on his part, not only a close observance of the game, and a sleight-of-hand in counting and scoring, but also involved the constant correction, by looks, and frowns, and kicks under the table, of Richard Swiveller, who, being bewildered by the rapidity with which his cards were told, and the rate at which the pegs travelled down the board, could not be prevented from sometimes expressing his surprise and incredulity. Mrs. Quilp, too, was the partner of young Trent, and for every look that passed between them, and every word they spoke, and every card they played, the dwarf had eyes and ears; not occupied alone with what was passing above the table, but with signals that might be exchanging beneath it, which he laid all kinds of traps to detect; besides often treading on his wife's toes to see whether she cried out or remained silent under the infliction, in which latter case it would have been quite clear that Trent had been treading on her toes before. Yet, in the midst of all these distractions, the one eye was upon the old lady always, and if she so much as stealthily advanced a tea-spoon towards a neighbouring glass (which she often did), for the purpose of abstracting but one sup of its sweet contents, Quilp's hands would overset it in the very moment of her triumph, and Quilp's mocking voice implore her to regard her precious health. And in any one of these his many cares, from first to last, Quilp never flagged nor faltered.

At length when they had played a great many rubbers and drawn pretty freely upon the case-bottle, Mr. Quilp warned his lady to retire to rest, and that submissive wife complying, and being followed by her indignant mother, Mr. Swiveller fell asleep. The dwarf, beckoning his remaining companion to the other end of the room, held a short conference with him in whispers.

"It's as well not to say more than one can help before our worthy friend," said Quilp, making a grimace towards the slumbering Dick. "Is it a bargain between us, Fred? Shall he marry little rosy Nell by-and-by?"

"You have some end of your own to answer, of course," returned the other.

"Of course I have, dear Fred," said Quilp, grinning to think how little he suspected what the real end was. "It's retaliation, perhaps;

perhaps whim. I have influence, Fred, to help or oppose. Which way shall I use it? There are a pair of scales, and it goes into one."

"Throw it into mine, then," said Trent.

"It's done, Fred," rejoined Quilp, stretching out his clenched hand and opening it as if he had let some weight fall out. "It's in the scale from this time, and turns it, Fred. Mind that."

"Where have they gone?" asked Trent.

Quilp shook his head, and said that point remained to be discovered, which it might be easily. When it was, they would begin their preliminary advances. He would visit the old man, or even Richard Swiveller might visit him, and by affecting a deep concern in his behalf, and imploring him to settle in some worthy home, lead to the child's remembering him with gratitude and favour. Once impressed to this extent, it would be easy, he said, to win her in a year or two, for she supposed the old man to be poor, as it was a part of his jealous policy (in common with many other misers) to feign to be so to those about him.

"He has feigned it often enough to me, of late," said Trent.

"Oh, and to me too!" replied the dwarf. "Which is more extraordinary, as I know how rich he really is."

"I suppose you should," said Trent.

"I think I should indeed," rejoined the dwarf; and in that, at least, he spoke the truth.

After a few more whispered words, they returned to the table, and the young man, rousing Richard Swiveller, informed him that he was waiting to depart. This was welcome news to Dick, who started up directly. After a few words of confidence in the result of their project had been exchanged, they bade the grinning Quilp good night.

Quilp crept to the window as they passed in the street below, and listened. Trent was pronouncing an encomium upon his wife, and they were both wondering by what enchantment she had been brought to marry such a misshapen wretch as he. The dwarf, after watching their retreating shadows with a wider grin than his face had yet displayed, stole softly in the dark to bed.

In this hatching of their scheme, neither Trent nor Quilp had had one thought about the happiness or misery of poor innocent Nell. It would have been strange if the careless profligate, who was the butt of both, had been harassed by any such consideration; for his high opinion of his own merits and deserts rendered the project rather a laudable one than otherwise; and if he had been visited by so unwonted a guest as



reflection, he would—being a brute only in the gratification of his appetites—have soothed his conscience with the plea that he did not mean to beat or kill his wife, and would therefore, after all said and done, be a very tolerable, average husband.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.



It was not until they were quite exhausted, and could no longer maintain the pace at which they had fled from the race-ground, that the old man and the child ventured to stop, and sit down to rest upon the borders of a little wood. Here, though the course was hidden from their view, they could yet faintly distinguish the noise of distant shouts, the hum of voices, and the beating of drums. Climbing the eminence which lay between them and the spot they had left, the child could even discern the fluttering flags and white tops of booths; but no person was approaching towards them, and their resting-place was solitary and still.

Some time elapsed before she could reassure her trembling companion, or restore him to a state of moderate tranquillity. His disordered imagination represented to him a crowd of persons stealing towards them beneath the cover of the bushes, lurking in every ditch, and peeping from the boughs of every rustling tree. He was haunted by apprehensions of being led captive to some gloomy place where he would be chained and scourged, and, worse than all, where Nell could never come to see him, save through iron bars and gratings in the wall. His terrors affected the child. Separation from her grandfather was the greatest evil she could dread; and feeling for the time as though, go where they would, they were to be hunted down, and could never be safe but in hiding, her heart failed her, and her courage drooped.

In one so young, and so unused to the scenes in which she had lately moved, this sinking of the spirit was not surprising. But Nature often enshrines gallant and noble hearts in weak bosoms—oftenest, God bless her, in female breasts—and when the child, casting her tearful eyes upon the old man, remembered how weak he was, and how destitute and helpless he would be if she failed him, her heart swelled within her, and animated her with new strength and fortitude.

“We are quite safe now, and have nothing to fear indeed, dear grandfather,” she said.

“Nothing to fear!” returned the old man. “Nothing to fear if they took me from thee! Nothing to fear if they parted us! Nobody is true to me. No, not one. Not even Nell!”

“Oh! do not say that,” replied the child, “for if ever anybody was true at heart, and earnest, I am. I am sure you know I am.”

“Then how,” said the old man, looking fearfully round, “how can you bear to think that we are safe, when they are searching for me everywhere, and may come here and steal upon us, even while we’re talking?”

“Because I’m sure we have not been followed,” said the child. “Judge for yourself, dear grandfather; look round, and see how quiet and still it is. We are alone together, and may ramble where we like. Not safe! Could I feel easy—did I feel at ease—when any danger threatened you?”

“True, true,” he answered, pressing her hand, but still looking anxiously about. “What noise was that?”

“A bird,” said the child, “flying into the wood, and leading the way for us to follow. You remember that we said we would walk in woods and fields, and by the side of rivers, and how happy we would be—you remember that? But here, while the sun shines above our heads, and everything is bright and happy, we are sitting sadly down, and losing time. See what a pleasant path; and there’s the bird—the same bird—now he flies to another tree, and stays to sing. Come!”

When they rose up from the ground, and took the shady track which led them through the wood, she bounded on before, printing her tiny footsteps in the moss, which rose elastic from so light a pressure, and gave it back as mirrors throw off breath; and thus she lured the old man on, with many a backward look and merry beck, now pointing stealthily to some lone bird as it perched and twittered on a branch that strayed across their path, now stopping to listen to the songs that broke the happy silence, or watch the sun as it trembled through the leaves, and stealing in among the ivied trunks of stout old trees, opened long paths of light. As they passed onward, parting the boughs that clustered in their way, the serenity which the child had first assumed stole into her breast in earnest; the old man cast no longer fearful looks behind, but felt at ease, and cheerful, for the further they passed into the deep green shade, the more they felt that the tranquil mind of God was there, and shed its peace on them.

At length the path, becoming clearer and less intricate, brought them to the end of the wood,

and into a public road. Taking their way along it for a short distance, they came to a lane, so shaded by the trees on either hand that they met together overhead, and arched the narrow way. A broken finger-post announced that this led to a village three miles off; and thither they resolved to bend their steps.

The miles appeared so long that they sometimes thought they must have missed their road. But at last, to their great joy, it led downward in a steep descent, with overhanging banks over which the footpaths led; and the clustered houses of the village peeped from the woody hollow below.

It was a very small place. The men and boys were playing at cricket on the green; and as the other folks were looking on, they wandered up and down, uncertain where to seek a humble lodging. There was but one old man in the little garden before his cottage, and him they were timid of approaching, for he was the schoolmaster, and had "School" written up over his window in black letters on a white board. He was a pale, simple-looking man, of a spare and meagre habit, and sat among his flowers and beehives, smoking his pipe, in the little porch before his door.

"Speak to him, dear," the old man whispered. "I am almost afraid to disturb him," said the child timidly. "He does not seem to see us. Perhaps, if we wait a little, he may look this way."

They waited, but the schoolmaster cast no look towards them, and still sat, thoughtful and silent, in the little porch. He had a kind face. In his plain old suit of black, he looked pale and meagre. They fancied, too, a lonely air about him and his house, but perhaps that was because the other people formed a merry company upon the green, and he seemed the only solitary man in all the place.

They were very tired, and the child would have been bold enough to address even a schoolmaster, but for something in his manner which seemed to denote that he was uneasy or distressed. As they stood hesitating at a little distance, they saw that he sat for a few minutes at a time like one in a brown study, then laid aside his pipe and took a few turns in his garden, then approached the gate and looked towards the green, then took up his pipe again with a sigh, and sat down thoughtfully as before.

As nobody else appeared, and it would soon be dark, Nell at length took courage, and, when he had resumed his pipe and seat, ventured to draw near, leading her grandfather by the hand. The slight noise they made in raising the latch

of the wicket-gate caught his attention. He looked at them kindly, but seemed disappointed too, and slightly shook his head.

Nell dropped a curtsy, and told him they were poor travellers who sought a shelter for the night, which they would gladly pay for, so far as their means allowed. The schoolmaster looked earnestly at her as she spoke, laid aside his pipe, and rose up directly.

"If you could direct us anywhere, sir," said the child, "we should take it very kindly."

"You have been walking a long way," said the schoolmaster.

"A long way, sir," the child replied.

"You're a young traveller, my child," he said, laying his hand gently on her head. "Your grandchild, friend?"

"Ay, sir," cried the old man, "and the stay and comfort of my life."

"Come in," said the schoolmaster.

Without further preface he conducted them into his little schoolroom, which was parlour and kitchen likewise, and told them they were welcome to remain under his roof till morning. Before they had done thanking him, he spread a coarse white cloth upon the table, with knives and platters; and, bringing out some bread and cold meat and a jug of beer, besought them to eat and drink.

The child looked round the room as she took her seat. There were a couple of forms, notched and cut and inked all over; a small deal desk perched on four legs, at which no doubt the master sat; a few dog's-eared books upon a high shelf; and beside them a motley collection of pegtops, balls, kites, fishing-lines, marbles, half-eaten apples, and other confiscated property of idle urchins. Displayed on hooks upon the wall in all their terrors were the cane and ruler; and near them, on a small shelf of its own, the dunce's cap, made of old newspapers, and decorated with glaring wafers of the largest size. But the great ornaments of the walls were certain moral sentences fairly copied in good round text, and well-worked sums in simple addition and multiplication, evidently achieved by the same hand, which were plentifully pasted all round the room: for the double purpose, as it seemed, of bearing testimony to the excellence of the school, and kindling a worthy emulation in the bosoms of the scholars.

"Yes," said the old schoolmaster, observing that her attention was caught by these latter specimens. "That's beautiful writing, my dear."

"Very, sir," replied the child modestly. "Is it yours?"

"Mine!" he returned, taking out his spec-



tacles and putting them on, to have a better view of the triumphs so dear to his heart. "I couldn't write like that, nowadays. No. They're all done by one hand; a little hand it is, not so old as yours, but a very clever one."

As the schoolmaster said this, he saw that a small blot of ink had been thrown on one of the copies, so he took a penknife from his pocket, and, going up to the wall, carefully scraped it out. When he had finished, he walked slowly backward from the writing, admiring it as one might contemplate a beautiful picture, but with something of sadness in his voice and manner which quite touched the child, though she was unacquainted with its cause.

"A little hand indeed," said the poor schoolmaster. "Far beyond all his companions, in his learning and his sports too, how did he ever come to be so fond of me? That I should love him is no wonder, but that he should love me——" And there the schoolmaster stopped, and took off his spectacles to wipe them, as though they had grown dim.

"I hope there is nothing the matter, sir," said Nell anxiously.

"Not much, my dear," returned the schoolmaster. "I hoped to have seen him on the green to-night. He was always foremost among them. But he'll be there to-morrow."

"Has he been ill?" asked the child with a child's quick sympathy.

"Not very. They said he was wandering in his head yesterday, dear boy, and so they said the day before. But that's a part of that kind of disorder; it's not a bad sign—not at all a bad sign."

The child was silent. He walked to the door, and looked wistfully out. The shadows of night were gathering, and all was still.

"If he could lean upon anybody's arm, he would come to me, I know," he said, returning into the room. "He always came into the garden to say good night. But perhaps his illness has only just taken a favourable turn, and it's too late for him to come out, for it's very damp, and there's a heavy dew. It's much better he shouldn't come to-night."

The schoolmaster lighted a candle, fastened the window shutter, and closed the door. But after he had done this, and sat silent a little time, he took down his hat, and said he would go and satisfy himself, if Nell would sit up till he returned. The child readily complied, and he went out.

She sat there half an hour or more, feeling the place very strange and lonely, for she had prevailed upon the old man to go to bed, and there

was nothing to be heard but the ticking of an old clock, and the whistling of the wind among the trees. When he returned, he took his seat in the chimney-corner, but remained silent for a long time. At length he turned to her, and, speaking very gently, hoped she would say a prayer that night for a sick child.

"My favourite scholar!" said the poor schoolmaster, smoking a pipe he had forgotten to light, and looking mournfully round upon the walls. "It is a little hand to have done all that, and waste away with sickness. It is a very, very little hand!"

## CHAPTER XXV.



AFTER a sound night's rest in a chamber in the thatched roof, in which it seemed the sexton had for some years been a lodger, but which he had lately deserted for a wife and a cottage of his own, the child rose early in the morning, and descended to the room where she had supped last night. As the schoolmaster had already left his bed and gone out, she bestirred herself to make it neat and comfortable, and had just finished its arrangement when the kind host returned.

He thanked her many times, and said that the old dame who usually did such offices for him had gone to nurse the little scholar whom he had told her of. The child asked how he was, and hoped he was better.

"No," rejoined the schoolmaster, shaking his head sorrowfully, "no better. They even say he is worse."

"I am very sorry for that, sir," said the child.

The poor schoolmaster appeared to be gratified by her earnest manner, but yet rendered more uneasy by it, for he added hastily that anxious people often magnified an evil, and thought it greater than it was. "For my part," he said in his quiet, patient way, "I hope it's not so. I don't think he can be worse."

The child asked his leave to prepare breakfast, and her grandfather coming down-stairs, they all three partook of it together. While the meal was in progress, their host remarked that the old man seemed much fatigued, and evidently stood in need of rest.

"If the journey you have before you is a long one," he said, "and don't press you for one day, you're very welcome to pass another night here. I should really be glad if you would, friend."

He saw that the old man looked at Nell, un-

certain whether to accept or decline his offer; and added:

"I shall be glad to have your young companion with me for one day. If you can do a charity to a lone man, and rest yourself at the same time, do so. If you must proceed upon your journey, I wish you well through it, and will walk a little way with you before school begins."

"What are we to do, Nell?" said the old man irresolutely. "Say what we're to do, dear."

It required no great persuasion to induce the child to answer that they had better accept the invitation and remain. She was happy to show her gratitude to the kind schoolmaster by busying herself in the performance of such household duties as his little cottage stood in need of. When these were done, she took some needle-work from her basket, and sat herself down upon a stool beside the lattice, where the honeysuckle and woodbine entwined their tender stems, and stealing into the room, filled it with their delicious breath. Her grandfather was basking in the sun outside, breathing the perfume of the flowers, and idly watching the clouds as they floated on before the light summer wind.

As the schoolmaster, after arranging the two forms in due order, took his seat behind his desk and made other preparations for school, the child was apprehensive that she might be in the way, and offered to withdraw to her little bedroom. But this he would not allow, and, as he seemed pleased to have her there, she remained, busying herself with her work.

"Have you many scholars, sir?" she asked.

The poor schoolmaster shook his head, and said that they barely filled the two forms.

"Are the others clever, sir?" asked the child, glancing at the trophies on the wall.

"Good boys," returned the schoolmaster, "good boys enough, my dear, but they'll never do like that."

A small white-headed boy with a sunburnt face appeared at the door while he was speaking, and, stopping there to make a rustic bow, came in and took his seat upon one of the forms. The white-headed boy then put an open book, astonishingly dog's-eared, upon his knees, and, thrusting his hands into his pockets, began counting the marbles with which they were filled; displaying in the expression of his face a remarkable capacity of totally abstracting his mind from the spelling on which his eyes were fixed. Soon afterwards another white-headed little boy came straggling in, and after him a red-headed lad, and after him two more with white heads, and then one with a flaxen poll,

and so on until the forms were occupied by a dozen boys or thereabouts, with heads of every colour but grey, and ranging in their ages from four years old to fourteen years or more; for the legs of the youngest were a long way from the floor when he sat upon the form, and the eldest was a heavy, good-tempered, foolish fellow, about half a head taller than the schoolmaster.

At the top of the first form—the post of honour in the school—was the vacant place of the little sick scholar, and at the head of the row of pegs on which those who came in hats or caps were wont to hang them up, one was left empty. No boy attempted to violate the sanctity of seat or peg, but many a one looked from the empty spaces to the schoolmaster, and whispered his idle neighbour behind his hand.

Then began the hum of conning over lessons and getting them by heart, the whispered jest and stealthy game, and all the noise and drawl of school; and in the midst of the din sat the poor schoolmaster, the very image of meekness and simplicity, vainly attempting to fix his mind upon the duties of the day, and to forget his little friend. But the tedium of his office reminded him more strongly of the willing scholar, and his thoughts were rambling from his pupils—it was plain.

None knew this better than the idlest boys, who, growing bolder with impunity, waxed louder and more daring; playing odd-or-even under the master's eye, eating apples openly and without rebuke, pinching each other in sport or malice without the least reserve, and cutting their autographs in the very legs of his desk. The puzzled dunce, who stood beside it to say his lesson out of book, looked no longer at the ceiling for forgotten words, but drew closer to the master's elbow and boldly cast his eye upon the page; the wag of the little troop squinted and made grimaces (at the smallest boy, of course), holding no book before his face, and his approving audience knew no constraint in their delight. If the master did chance to rouse himself and seem alive to what was going on, the noise subsided for a moment, and no eyes met his but wore a studious and a deeply humble look; but the instant he relapsed again, it broke out afresh, and ten times louder than before.

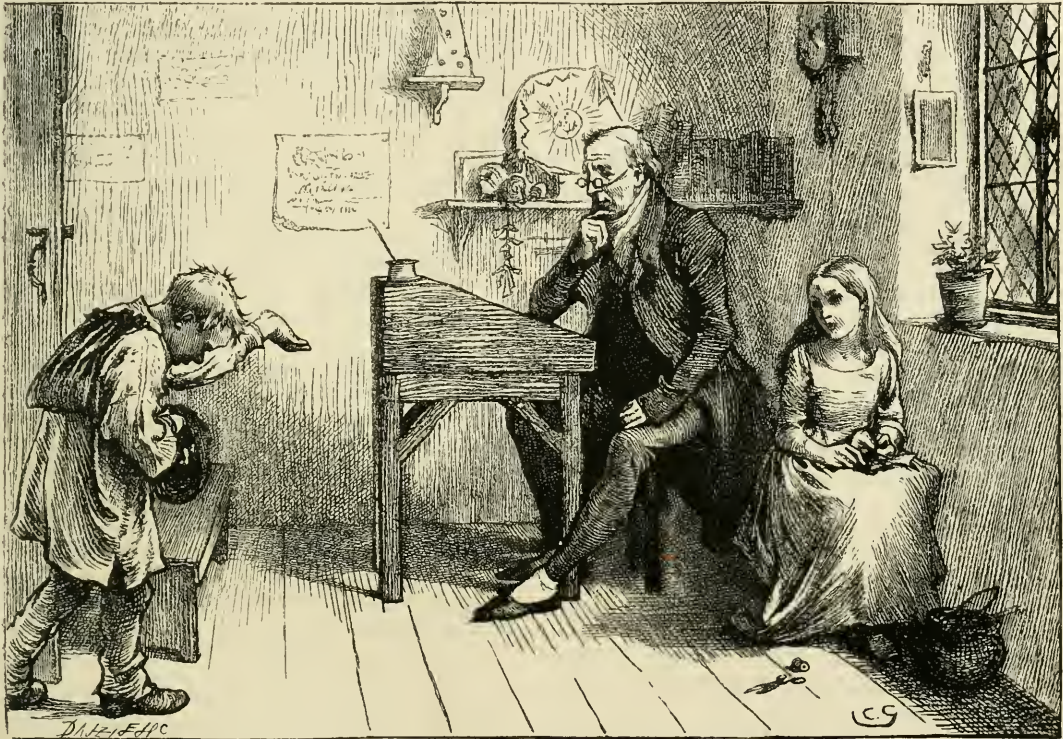
Oh! how some of those idle fellows longed to be outside, and how they looked at the open door and window, as if they half meditated rushing violently out, plunging into the woods, and being wild boys and savages from that time forth! What rebellious thoughts of the cool river, and some shady bathing-place beneath willow-trees with branches dipping in the water,



kept tempting and urging that sturdy boy, who, with his shirt-collar unbuttoned and flung back as far as it could go, sat fanning his flushed face with a spelling-book, wishing himself a whale, or a titlbat, or a fly, or anything but a boy at school on that hot, broiling day! Heat! Ask that other boy, whose seat being nearest to the door, gave him opportunities of gliding out into the garden and driving his companions to madness by dipping his face into the bucket of the well, and then rolling on the grass—ask him if there were ever such a day as that, when even

the bees were diving deep down into the cups of flowers, and stopping there, as if they had made up their minds to retire from business and be manufacturers of honey no more. The day was made for laziness, and lying on one's back in green places, and staring at the sky till its brightness forced one to shut one's eyes and go to sleep; and was this a time to be poring over musty books in a dark room, slighted by the very sun itself? Monstrous!

Nell sat by the window occupied with her work, but attentive still to all that passed, though



“A SMALL WHITE-HEADED BOY WITH A SUNBURNT FACE APPEARED AT THE DOOR WHILE HE WAS SPEAKING, AND, STOPPING THERE TO MAKE A RUSTIC BOW, CAME IN.”

sometimes rather timid of the boisterous boys. The lessons over, writing-time began; and there being but one desk, and that the master's, each boy sat at it in turn and laboured at his crooked copy, while the master walked about. This was a quieter time; for he would come and look over the writer's shoulder, and tell him mildly to observe how such a letter was turned in such a copy on the wall, praise such an up-stroke here and such a down-stroke there, and bid him take it for his model. Then he would stop and tell them what the sick child had said last night, and

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how he had longed to be among them once again; and such was the poor schoolmaster's gentle and affectionate manner, that the boys seemed quite remorseful that they had worried him so much, and were absolutely quiet; eating no apples, cutting no names, inflicting no pinches, and making no grimaces for full two minutes afterwards.

“I think, boys,” said the schoolmaster, when the clock struck twelve, “that I shall give an extra half-holiday this afternoon.”

At this intelligence, the boys, led on and

headed by the tall boy, raised a great shout, in the midst of which the master was seen to speak, but could not be heard. As he held up his hand, however, in token of his wish that they should be silent, they were considerate enough to leave off as soon as the longest-winded among them were quite out of breath.

"You must promise me first," said the schoolmaster, "that you'll not be noisy, or at least, if you are, that you'll go away and be so—away out of the village I mean. I'm sure you wouldn't disturb your old playmate and companion."

There was a general murmur (and perhaps a very sincere one, for they were but boys) in the negative; and the tall boy, perhaps as sincerely as any of them, called those about him to witness that he had only shouted in a whisper.

"Then pray don't forget, there's my dear scholars," said the schoolmaster, "what I have asked you, and do it as a favour to me. Be as happy as you can, and don't be unmindful that you are blessed with health. Good-bye all!"

"Thankee, sir," and "Good-bye, sir," were said a great many times in a variety of voices, and the boys went out very slowly and softly. But there was the sun shining, and there were the birds singing, as the sun only shines and the birds only sing on holidays and half-holidays; there were the trees waving to all free boys to climb and nestle among their leafy branches; the hay, entreating them to come and scatter it to the pure air; the green corn, gently beckoning towards wood and stream; the smooth ground, rendered smoother still by blending lights and shadows, inviting to runs and leaps, and long walks God knows whither. It was more than boy could bear, and with a joyous whoop the whole cluster took to their heels and spread themselves about, shouting and laughing as they went.

"It's natural, thank Heaven!" said the poor schoolmaster, looking after them. "I'm very glad they didn't mind me!"

It is difficult, however, to please everybody, as most of us would have discovered, even without the fable which bears that moral; and in the course of the afternoon several mothers and aunts of pupils looked in to express their entire disapproval of the schoolmaster's proceeding. A few confined themselves to hints, such as politely inquiring what red-letter day or saint's day the almanac said it was; a few (these were the profound village politicians) argued that it was a slight to the throne and an affront to church and state, and savoured of revolutionary principles, to grant a half-holiday upon any lighter occasion

than the birthday of the Monarch; but the majority expressed their displeasure on private grounds and in plain terms, arguing that to put the pupils on this short allowance of learning was nothing but an act of downright robbery and fraud: and one old lady, finding that she could not inflame or irritate the peaceable schoolmaster by talking to him, bounced out of his house and talked at him for half an hour outside his own window, to another old lady, saying that of course he would deduct this half-holiday from his weekly charge, or of course he would naturally expect to have an opposition started against him; there was no want of idle chaps in that neighbourhood (here the old lady raised her voice), and some chaps who were too idle even to be schoolmasters, might soon find that there were other chaps put over their heads, and so she would have them take care, and look pretty sharp about them. But all these taunts and vexations failed to elicit one word from the meek schoolmaster, who sat with the child by his side,—a little more dejected, perhaps, but quite silent and uncomplaining.

Towards night an old woman came tottering up the garden as speedily as she could, and, meeting the schoolmaster at the door, said he was to go to Dame West's directly, and had best run on before her. He and the child were on the point of going out together for a walk, and without relinquishing her hand, the schoolmaster hurried away, leaving the messenger to follow as she might.

They stopped at a cottage door, and the schoolmaster knocked softly at it with his hand. It was opened without loss of time. They entered a room where a little group of women were gathered about one, older than the rest, who was crying very bitterly, and sat wringing her hands and rocking herself to and fro.

"Oh, dame!" said the schoolmaster, drawing near her chair, "is it so bad as this?"

"He's going fast," cried the old woman; "my grandson's dying. It's all along of you. You shouldn't see him now, but for his being so earnest on it. This is what his learning has brought him to. Oh dear, dear, dear, what can I do?"

"Do not say that I am in any fault," urged the gentle schoolmaster. "I am not hurt, dame. No, no. You are in great distress of mind, and don't mean what you say. I am sure you don't."

"I do," returned the old woman. "I mean it all. If he hadn't been poring over his books out of fear of you, he would have been well and merry now, I know he would."

The schoolmaster looked round upon the other women as if to entreat some one among



them to say a kind word for him, but they shook their heads, and murmured to each other that they never thought there was much good in learning, and that this convinced them. Without saying a word in reply, or giving them a look of reproach, he followed the old woman who had summoned him (and who had now rejoined them) into another room, where his infant friend, half dressed, lay stretched upon a bed.

He was a very young boy; quite a little child. His hair still hung in curls about his face, and his eyes were very bright; but their light was of Heaven, not earth. The schoolmaster took a seat beside him, and, stooping over the pillow, whispered his name. The boy sprang up, stroked his face with his hand, and threw his wasted arms around his neck, crying out that he was his dear kind friend.

"I hope I always was. I meant to be, God knows," said the poor schoolmaster.

"Who is that?" said the boy, seeing Nell. "I am afraid to kiss her, lest I should make her ill. Ask her to shake hands with me."

The sobbing child came closer up, and took the little languid hand in hers. Releasing his again after a time, the sick boy laid him gently down.

"You remember the garden, Harry," whispered the schoolmaster, anxious to rouse him, for a dulness seemed gathering upon the child, "and how pleasant it used to be in the evening-time? You must make haste to visit it again, for I think the very flowers have missed you, and are less gay than they used to be. You will come soon, my dear, very soon now,—won't you?"

The boy smiled faintly—so very, very faintly—and put his hand upon his friend's grey head. He moved his lips too, but no voice came from them; no, not a sound.

In the silence that ensued, the hum of distant voices borne upon the evening air came floating through the open window. "What's that?" said the sick child, opening his eyes.

"The boys at play upon the green."

He took a handkerchief from his pillow, and tried to wave it above his head. But the feeble arm dropped powerless down.

"Shall I do it?" said the schoolmaster.

"Please wave it at the window," was the faint reply. "Tie it to the lattice. Some of them may see it there. Perhaps they'll think of me and look this way."

He raised his head, and glanced from the fluttering signal to his idle bat, that lay with slate and book and other boyish property upon a table in the room. And then he laid him softly down

once more, and asked if the little girl were there, for he could not see her.

She stepped forward, and pressed the passive hand that lay upon the coverlet. The two old friends and companions—for such they were, though they were man and child—held each other in a long embrace, and then the little scholar turned his face towards the wall, and fell asleep.

The poor schoolmaster sat in the same place, holding the small cold hand in his, and chafing it. It was but the hand of a dead child. He felt that; and yet he chafed it still, and could not lay it down.

## CHAPTER XXVI.



ALMOST broken-hearted, Nell withdrew with the schoolmaster from the bedside, and returned to his cottage. In the midst of her grief and tears she was yet careful to conceal their real cause from the old man, for the dead boy had been a grandchild, and left but one aged relative to mourn his premature decay.

She stole away to bed as quickly as she could, and, when she was alone, gave free vent to the sorrow with which her breast was overcharged. But the sad scene she had witnessed was not without its lesson of content and gratitude; of content with the lot which left her health and freedom; and gratitude that she was spared to the one relative and friend she loved, and to live and move in a beautiful world, when so many young creatures—as young and full of hope as she—were stricken down and gathered to their graves. How many of the mounds in that old churchyard where she had lately strayed, grew green above the graves of children! And though she thought as a child herself, and did not, perhaps, sufficiently consider to what a bright and happy existence those who die young are borne, and how in death they lose the pain of seeing others die around them, bearing to the tomb some strong affection of their hearts (which makes the old die many times in one long life), still she thought wisely enough to draw a plain and easy moral from what she had seen that night, and to store it deep in her mind.

Her dreams were of the little scholar: not confined and covered up, but mingling with angels, and smiling happily. The sun, darting his cheerful rays into the room, awoke her; and now there remained but to take leave of the poor schoolmaster, and wander forth once more.

By the time they were ready to depart, school had begun. In the darkened room the din of yesterday was going on again: a little sobered and softened down, perhaps, but only a very little, if at all. The schoolmaster rose from his desk, and walked with them to the gate.

It was with a trembling and reluctant hand that the child held out to him the money which the lady had given her at the races for her flowers: faltering in her thanks as she thought how small the sum was, and blushing as she offered it. But he bade her put it up, and, stooping to kiss her cheek, turned back into his house.

They had not gone half-a-dozen paces when he was at the door again; the old man retraced his steps to shake hands, and the child did the same.

"Good fortune and happiness go with you!" said the poor schoolmaster. "I am quite a solitary man now. If you ever pass this way again, you'll not forget the little village school."

"We shall never forget it, sir," rejoined Nell; "nor ever forget to be grateful to you for your kindness to us."

"I have heard such words from the lips of children very often," said the schoolmaster, shaking his head, and smiling thoughtfully, "but they were soon forgotten. I had attached one young friend to me, the better friend for being young—but that's over—God bless you!"

They bade him farewell very many times, and turned away, walking slowly and often looking back, until they could see him no more. At length they had left the village far behind, and even lost sight of the smoke among the trees. They trudged onward now at a quicker pace, resolving to keep the main road, and go wherever it might lead them.

But main roads stretch a long, long way. With the exception of two or three inconsiderable clusters of cottages which they passed without stopping, and one lonely roadside public-house where they had some bread and cheese, this highway had led them to nothing—late in the afternoon—and still lengthened out, far in the distance, the same dull, tedious, winding course that they had been pursuing all day. As they had no resource, however, but to go forward, they still kept on, though at a much slower pace, being very weary and fatigued.

The afternoon had worn away into a beautiful evening, when they arrived at a point where the road made a sharp turn and struck across a common. On the border of this common, and close to the hedge which divided it from the cultivated fields, a caravan was drawn up to rest; upon

which, by reason of its situation, they came so suddenly that they could not have avoided it if they would.

It was not a shabby, dingy, dusty cart, but a smart little house upon wheels, with white dimity curtains festooning the windows, and window shutters of green picked out with panels of a staring red, in which happily-contrasted colours the whole concern shone brilliant. Neither was it a poor caravan drawn by a single donkey or emaciated horse, for a pair of horses in pretty good condition were released from the shafts and grazing on the frozzy grass. Neither was it a gipsy caravan, for at the open door (graced with a bright brass knocker) sat a Christian lady, stout and comfortable to look upon, who wore a large bonnet trembling with bows. And that it was not an unprovided or destitute caravan was clear from this lady's occupation, which was the very pleasant and refreshing one of taking tea. The tea-things, including a bottle of rather suspicious character and a cold knuckle of ham, were set forth upon a drum, covered with a white napkin; and there, as if at the most convenient round table in all the world, sat this roving lady, taking her tea and enjoying the prospect.

It happened that at that moment the lady of the caravan had her cup (which, that everything about her might be of a stout and comfortable kind, was a breakfast-cup) to her lips, and that having her eyes lifted to the sky in her enjoyment of the full flavour of the tea, not unmingled possibly with just the slightest dash or gleam of something out of the suspicious bottle—but this is mere speculation, and not distinct matter of history—it happened that being thus agreeably engaged, she did not see the travellers when they first came up. It was not until she was in the act of setting down the cup, and drawing a long breath after the exertion of causing its contents to disappear, that the lady of the caravan beheld an old man and a young child walking slowly by, and glancing at her proceedings with eyes of modest but hungry admiration.

"Hey?" cried the lady of the caravan, scooping the crumbs out of her lap, and swallowing the same before wiping her lips. "Yes, to be sure.—Who won the Helter-Skelter Plate, child?"

"Won what, ma'am?" asked Nell.

"The Helter-Skelter Plate at the races, child—the plate that was run for on the second day."

"On the second day, ma'am?"

"Second day! Yes, second day," repeated the lady with an air of impatience. "Can't you say who won the Helter-Skelter Plate when you're asked the question civilly?"



"I don't know, ma'am."

"Don't know!" repeated the lady of the caravan; "why, you were there. I saw you with my own eyes."

Nell was not a little alarmed to hear this, supposing that the lady might be intimately acquainted with the firm of Short and Codlin; but what followed tended to reassure her.

"And very sorry I was," said the lady of the caravan, "to see you in company with a Punch; a low, practical, vulgar wretch, that people should scorn to look at."

"I was not there by choice," returned the child; "we didn't know our way, and the two men were very kind to us, and let us travel with them. Do you—do you know them, ma'am?"

"Know 'em, child!" cried the lady of the caravan in a sort of shriek. "Know *them!* But you're young and inexperienced, and that's your excuse for asking such a question. Do I look as if I knowed 'em, does the caravan look as if it knowed 'em?"

"No, ma'am, no," said the child, fearing she had committed some grievous fault. "I beg your pardon."

It was granted immediately, though the lady still appeared much ruffled and discomposed by the degrading supposition. The child then explained that they had left the races on the first day, and were travelling to the next town on that road, where they purposed to spend the night. As the countenance of the stout lady began to clear up, she ventured to inquire how far it was. The reply—which the stout lady did not come to until she had thoroughly explained that she went to the races on the first day in a gig, and as an expedition of pleasure, and that her presence there had no connection with any matters of business or profit—was, that the town was eight miles off.

This discouraging information a little dashed the child, who could scarcely repress a tear as she glanced along the darkening road. Her grandfather made no complaint, but he sighed heavily as he leaned upon his staff, and vainly tried to pierce the dusty distance.

The lady of the caravan was in the act of gathering her tea equipage together preparatory to clearing the table, but, noting the child's anxious manner, she hesitated and stopped. The child curtsied, thanked her for her information, and giving her hand to the old man, had already got some fifty yards or so away, when the lady of the caravan called to her to return.

"Come nearer, nearer still," said she, beckoning to her to ascend the steps. "Are you hungry, child?"

"Not very, but we are tired, and it's—it *is* a long way——"

"Well, hungry or not, you had better have some tea," rejoined her new acquaintance. "I suppose you are agreeable to that, old gentleman?"

The grandfather humbly pulled off his hat and thanked her. The lady of the caravan then bade him come up the steps likewise, but the drum proving an inconvenient table for two, they descended again, and sat upon the grass, where she handed down to them the tea-tray, the bread and butter, the knuckle of ham, and, in short, everything of which she had partaken herself, except the bottle, which she had already embraced an opportunity of slipping into her pocket.

"Set 'em out near the hind wheels, child, that's the best place," said their friend, superintending the arrangements from above. "Now hand up the teapot for a little more hot water, and a pinch of fresh tea, and then both of you eat and drink as much as you can, and don't spare anything; that's all I ask of you."

They might, perhaps, have carried out the lady's wish, if it had been less freely expressed, or even if it had not been expressed at all. But as this direction relieved them from any shadow of delicacy or uneasiness, they made a hearty meal, and enjoyed it to the utmost.

While they were thus engaged, the lady of the caravan alighted on the earth, and with her hands clasped behind her, and her large bonnet trembling excessively, walked up and down in a measured tread and very stately manner, surveying the caravan from time to time with an air of calm delight, and deriving particular gratification from the red panels and the brass knocker. When she had taken this gentle exercise for some time, she sat down upon the steps and called "George;" whereupon a man in a carter's frock, who had been so shrouded in a hedge up to this time as to see everything that passed without being seen himself, parted the twigs that concealed him, and appeared in a sitting attitude, supporting on his legs a baking-dish and a half-gallon stone bottle, and bearing in his right hand a knife, and in his left a fork.

"Yes, missus," said George.

"How did you find the cold pie, George?"

"It warn't amiss, mum."

"And the beer," said the lady of the caravan, with an appearance of being more interested in this question than the last; "is it passable, George?"

"It's more flatterer than it might be," George returned, "but it ain't so bad for all that."

To set the mind of his mistress at rest, he took a sip (amounting in quantity to a pint or thereabouts) from the stone bottle, and then snacked his lips, winked his eye, and nodded his head. No doubt with the same amiable desire, he immediately resumed his knife and fork, as a practical assurance that the beer had wrought no bad effect upon his appetite.

The lady of the caravan looked on approvingly for some time, and then said :

"Have you nearly finished?"

"Very nigh, mum." And indeed, after scraping the dish all round with his knife, and carrying the choice brown morsels to his mouth, and after taking such a scientific pull at the stone bottle that, by degrees almost imperceptible to the sight, his head went further and further back until he lay nearly at his full length upon the ground, this gentleman declared himself quite disengaged, and came forth from his retreat.

"I hope I haven't hurried you, George," said his mistress, who appeared to have a great sympathy with his late pursuit.

"If you have," returned the follower, wisely reserving himself for any favourable contingency that might occur, "we must make up for it next time, that's all."

"We are not a heavy load, George?"

"That's always what the ladies say," replied the man, looking a long way round, as if he were appealing to Nature in general against such monstrous propositions. "If you see a woman a driving, you'll always perceive that she never will keep her whip still; the horse can't go fast enough for her. If cattle have got their proper load, you never can persuade a woman that they'll not bear something more. What is the cause of this here?"

"Would these two travellers make much difference to the horses, if we took them with us?" asked his mistress, offering no reply to the philosophical inquiry, and pointing to Nell and the old man, who were painfully preparing to resume their journey on foot.

"They'd make a difference, in course," said George doggedly.

"Would they make much difference?" repeated his mistress. "They can't be very heavy."

"The weight o' the pair, mum," said George, eyeing them with the look of a man who was calculating within half an ounce or so, "would be a trifle under that of Oliver Cromwell."

Nell was very much surprised that the man should be so accurately acquainted with the weight of one whom she had read of in books as having lived considerably before their time, but

speedily forgot the subject in the joy of hearing that they were to go forward in the caravan, for which she thanked its lady with unaffected earnestness. She helped with great readiness and alacrity to put away the tea-things and other matters that were lying about, and, the horses being by that time harnessed, mounted into the vehicle, followed by her delighted grandfather. Their patroness then shut the door, and sat herself down by her drum at an open window; and, the steps being struck by George and stowed under the carriage, away they went, with a great noise of flapping and creaking and straining; and the bright brass knocker, which nobody ever knocked at, knocking one perpetual double knock of its own accord as they jolted heavily along.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

WHEN they had travelled slowly forward for some short distance, Nell ventured to steal a look round the caravan, and observe it more closely. One half of it—that moiety in which the comfortable proprietress was then seated—was carpeted, and so partitioned off at the further end as to accommodate a sleeping-place, constructed after the fashion of a berth on board ship, which was shaded, like the little windows, with fair white curtains, and looked comfortable enough, though by what kind of gymnastic exercise the lady of the caravan ever contrived to get into it was an unfathomable mystery. The other half served for a kitchen, and was fitted up with a stove whose small chimney passed through the roof. It held also a closet or larder, several chests, a great pitcher of water, and a few cooking utensils and articles of crockery. These latter necessities hung upon the walls, which, in that portion of the establishment devoted to the lady of the caravan, were ornamented with such gayer and lighter decorations as a triangle and a couple of well-thumbed tambourines.

The lady of the caravan sat at one window in all the pride and poetry of the musical instruments, and little Nell and her grandfather sat at the other in all the humility of the kettle and saucepans, while the machine jogged on and shifted the darkening prospect very slowly. At first the two travellers spoke little, and only in whispers, but, as they grew more familiar with the place, they ventured to converse with greater freedom, and talked about the country through



which they were passing, and the different objects that presented themselves, until the old man fell asleep; which the lady of the caravan observing, invited Nell to come and sit beside her.

"Well, child," she said, "how do you like this way of travelling?"

Nell replied that she thought it was very pleasant indeed, to which the lady assented in the case of people who had their spirits. For herself, she said, she was troubled with a lowness in that respect which required a constant stimulant; though whether the aforesaid stimulant was derived from the suspicious bottle of which mention has been already made, or from other sources, she did not say.

"That's the happiness of you young people," she continued. "You don't know what it is to be low in your feelings. You always have your appetites, too, and what a comfort that is!"

Nell thought that she could sometimes dispense with her own appetite very conveniently; and thought, moreover, that there was nothing, either in the lady's personal appearance or in her manner of taking tea, to lead to the conclusion that her natural relish for meat and drink had at all failed her. She silently assented, however, as in duty bound, to what the lady had said, and waited until she should speak again.

Instead of speaking, however, she sat looking at the child for a long time in silence, and then getting up, brought out from a corner a large roll of canvas about a yard in width, which she laid upon the floor and spread open with her foot, until it nearly reached from one end of the caravan to the other.

"There, child," she said, "read that."

Nell walked down it, and read aloud, in enormous black letters, the inscription, "JARLEY'S WAX-WORK."

"Read it again," said the lady complacently.

"Jarley's Wax-Work," repeated Nell.

"That's me," said the lady. "I am Mrs. Jarley."

Giving the child an encouraging look, intended to reassure her and let her know that, although she stood in the presence of the original Jarley, she must not allow herself to be utterly overwhelmed and borne down, the lady of the caravan unfolded another scroll, whereon was the inscription, "One hundred figures the full size of life," and then another scroll, on which was written, "The only stupendous collection of real wax-work in the world," and then several smaller scrolls with such inscriptions as, "Now exhibiting within"—"The genuine and

only Jarley"—"Jarley's unrivalled collection"—"Jarley is the delight of the Nobility and Gentry"—"The Royal Family are the patrons of Jarley." When she had exhibited these leviathans of public announcement to the astonished child, she brought forth specimens of the lesser fry in the shape of handbills, some of which were couched in the form of parodies on popular melodies, as, "Believe me if all Jarley's wax-work so rare"—"I saw thy show in youthful prime"—"Over the water to Jarley;" while, to consult all tastes, others were composed with a view to the lighter and more facetious spirits, as a parody on the favourite air of "If I had a donkey," beginning:

"If I know'd a donkey wot wouldn't go  
To see Mrs. JARLEY'S wax-work show  
Do you think I'd acknowledge him?  
Oh no no!

Then run to Jarley's"—

—besides several compositions in prose, purporting to be dialogues between the Emperor of China and an oyster, or the Archbishop of Canterbury and a Dissenter on the subject of church rates, but all having the same moral, namely, that the reader must make haste to Jarley's, and that children and servants were admitted at half-price. When she had brought all these testimonials of her important position in society to bear upon her young companion, Mrs. Jarley rolled them up, and having put them carefully away, sat down again, and looked at the child in triumph.

"Never go into the company of a filthy Punch any more," said Mrs. Jarley, "after this."

"I never saw any wax-work, ma'am," said Nell. "Is it funnier than Punch?"

"Funnier!" said Mrs. Jarley in a shrill voice.

"It is not funny at all."

"Oh!" said Nell with all possible humility.

"It isn't funny at all," repeated Mrs. Jarley.

"It's calm and—what's that word again—critical?—no—classical, that's it—it's calm and classical. No low beatings and knockings about, no jokings and squeakings like your precious Punches, but always the same, with a constantly unchanging air of coldness and gentility; and so like life, that if wax-work only spoke and walked about, you'd hardly know the difference. I won't go so far as to say that, as it is, I've seen wax-work quite like life, but I've certainly seen some life that was exactly like wax-work."

"Is it here, ma'am?" asked Nell, whose curiosity was awakened by this description.

"Is what here, child?"

"The wax-work, ma'am."

"Why, bless you, child, what are you thinking of? How could such a collection be here, where you see everything except the inside of one little cupboard and a few boxes? It's gone on

in the other wans to the assembly-rooms, and there it'll be exhibited the day after to-morrow. You are going to the same town, and you'll see it, I dare say. It's natural to expect that you'll see it, and I've no doubt you will. I suppose you



"SHE HANDED DOWN TO THEM THE TEA-TRAY, THE BREAD AND BUTTER, THE KNUCKLE OF HAM, AND, IN SHORT, EVERYTHING OF WHICH SHE HAD PARTAKEN HERSELF."

couldn't stop away if you was to try ever so much."

"I shall not be in the town, I think, ma'am," said the child.

"Not there!" cried Mrs. Jarley. "Then where will you be?"

"I—I—don't quite know. I am not certain."

"You don't mean to say that you're travelling about the country without knowing where you're going to?" said the lady of the caravan. "What curious people you are! What line are you in? You looked to me at the races, child, as if you



were quite out of your element, and had got there by accident."

"We were there quite by accident," returned Nell, confused by this abrupt questioning. "We are poor people, ma'am, and are only wandering about. We have nothing to do;—I wish we had."

"You amaze me more and more," said Mrs. Jarley after remaining for some time as mute as one of her own figures. "Why, what do you call yourselves? Not beggars?"

"Indeed, ma'am, I don't know what else we are," returned the child.

"Lord bless me!" said the lady of the caravan. "I never heard of such a thing. Who'd have thought it?"

She remained so long silent after this exclamation, that Nell feared she felt her having been induced to bestow her protection and conversation upon one so poor, to be an outrage upon her dignity that nothing could repair. This persuasion was rather confirmed than otherwise by the tone in which she at length broke silence and said:

"And yet you can read. And write too, I shouldn't wonder?"

"Yes, ma'am," said the child, fearful of giving new offence by the confession.

"Well, and what a thing that is!" returned Mrs. Jarley. "I can't!"

Neil said "Indeed!" in a tone which might imply, either that she was reasonably surprised to find the genuine and only Jarley, who was the delight of the Nobility and Gentry, and the peculiar pet of the Royal Family, destitute of these familiar arts; or that she presumed so great a lady could scarcely stand in need of such ordinary accomplishments. In whatever way Mrs. Jarley received the response, it did not provoke her to further questioning, or tempt her into any more remarks at the time, for she relapsed into a thoughtful silence, and remained in that state so long that Nell withdrew to the other window and rejoined her grandfather, who was now awake.

At length the lady of the caravan shook off her fit of meditation, and, summoning the driver to come under the window at which she was seated, held a long conversation with him in a low tone of voice, as if she were asking his advice on an important point, and discussing the pros and cons of some very weighty matter. This conference at length concluded, she drew in her head again, and beckoned Nell to approach.

"And the old gentleman too," said Mrs. Jarley; "for I want to have a word with him.

Do you want a good situation for your grand-daughter, master? If you do, I can put her in the way of getting one. What do you say?"

"I can't leave her," answered the old man. "We can't separate. What would become of me without her?"

"I should have thought you were old enough to take care of yourself, if you ever will be," retorted Mrs. Jarley sharply.

"But he never will be," said the child in an earnest whisper. "I fear he never will be again. Pray do not speak harshly to him. We are very thankful to you," she added aloud; "but neither of us could part from the other, if all the wealth of the world were halved between us."

Mrs. Jarley was a little disconcerted by this reception of her proposal, and looked at the old man, who tenderly took Nell's hand and detained it in his own, as if she could have very well dispensed with his company, or even his earthly existence. After an awkward pause, she thrust her head out of the window again, and had another conference with the driver upon some point on which they did not seem to agree quite so readily as on their former topic of discussion; but they concluded at last, and she addressed the grandfather again.

"If you're really disposed to employ yourself," said Mrs. Jarley, "there would be plenty for you to do in the way of helping to dust the figures, and take the checks, and so forth. What I want your grand-daughter for is to point 'em out to the company; they would be soon learnt, and she has a way with her that people wouldn't think unpleasant, though she does come after me; for I've been always accustomed to go round with visitors myself, which I should keep on doing now, only that my spirits make a little ease absolutely necessary. It's not a common offer, bear in mind," said the lady, rising into the tone and manner in which she was accustomed to address her audiences; "it's Jarley's wax-work, remember. The duty's very light and genteel, the company particular select, the exhibition takes place in assembly-rooms, town-halls, large rooms at inns, or auction galleries. There is none of your open-air waggrancy at Jarley's, recollect; there is no tarpaulin and sawdust at Jarley's, remember. Every expectation held out in the handbills is realised to the utmost, and the whole forms an effect of imposing brilliancy hitherto unrivalled in this kingdom. Remember that the price of admission is only sixpence, and that this is an opportunity which may never occur again!"

Descending from the sublime, when she had reached this point, to the details of common

life, Mrs. Jarley remarked that with reference to salary she could pledge herself to no specific sum until she had sufficiently tested Nell's abilities, and narrowly watched her in the performance of her duties. But, board and lodging, both for her and her grandfather, she bound herself to provide, and she furthermore passed her word that the board should always be good in quality, and in quantity plentiful.

Nell and her grandfather consulted together, and while they were so engaged, Mrs. Jarley, with her hands behind her, walked up and down the caravan, as she had walked after tea on the dull earth, with uncommon dignity and self-esteem. Nor will this appear so slight a circumstance as to be unworthy of mention, when it is remembered that the caravan was in uneasy motion all the time, and that none but a person of great natural stateliness and acquired grace could have forborne to stagger.

"Now, child?" cried Mrs. Jarley, coming to a halt as Nell turned towards her.

"We are very much obliged to you, ma'am," said Nell, "and thankfully accept your offer."

"And you'll never be sorry for it," returned Mrs. Jarley. "I'm pretty sure of that. So, as that's all settled, let us have a bit of supper."

In the meanwhile, the caravan blundered on as if it too had been drinking strong beer and was drowsy, and came at last upon the paved streets of a town which were clear of passengers, and quiet, for it was by this time near midnight, and the townspeople were all abed. As it was too late an hour to repair to the exhibition-room, they turned aside into a piece of waste ground that lay just within the old town-gate, and drew up there for the night near to another caravan, which, notwithstanding that it bore on the lawful panel the great name of Jarley, and was employed, besides, in conveying from place to place the wax-work which was its country's pride, was designated by a grovelling Stamp Office as a "Common Stage Waggon," and numbered too—seven thousand odd hundred—as though its precious freight were mere flour or coals.

This ill-used machine being empty (for it had deposited its burden at the place of exhibition, and lingered here until its services were again required) was assigned to the old man as his sleeping-place for the night; and within its wooden walls Nell made him up the best bed she could from the materials at hand. For herself, she was to sleep in Mrs. Jarley's own travelling carriage, as a signal mark of that lady's favour and confidence.

She had taken leave of her grandfather, and

was returning to the other waggon, when she was tempted by the pleasant coolness of the night to linger for a little while in the air. The moon was shining down upon the old gateway of the town, leaving the low archway very black and dark; and with a mingled sensation of curiosity and fear, she slowly approached the gate, and stood still to look up at it, wondering to see how dark, and grim, and old, and cold it looked.

There was an empty niche from which some old statue had fallen or been carried away hundreds of years ago, and she was thinking what strange people it must have looked down upon when it stood there, and how many hard struggles might have taken place, and how many murders might have been done, upon that silent spot, when there suddenly emerged, from the black shade of the arch, a man. The instant he appeared, she recognised him. Who could have failed to recognise, in that instant, the ugly misshapen Quilp?

The street beyond was so narrow, and the shadow of the houses on one side of the way so deep, that he seemed to have risen out of the earth. But there he was. The child withdrew into a dark corner, and saw him pass close to her. He had a stick in his hand, and, when he had got clear of the shadow of the gateway, he leant upon it, looked back—directly, as it seemed, towards where she stood—and beckoned.

To her? Oh no, thank God, not to her! for as she stood, in an extremity of fear, hesitating whether to scream for help, or come from her hiding-place and fly, before he should draw nearer, there issued slowly forth from the arch another figure—that of a boy—who carried on his back a trunk.

"Faster, sirrah!" said Quilp, looking up at the old gateway, and showing in the moonlight like some monstrous image that had come down from its niche, and was casting a backward glance at its old house, "faster!"

"It's a dreadful heavy load, sir," the boy pleaded. "I've come on very fast, considering."

"You have come fast, considering!" retorted Quilp; "you creep, you dog, you crawl, you measure distance like a worm. There are the chimes now, half-past twelve."

He stopped to listen, and then, turning upon the boy with a suddenness and ferocity that made him start, asked at what hour the London coach passed the corner of the road. The boy replied, at one.

"Come on, then," said Quilp, "or I shall be too late. Faster—do you hear me? Faster."



The boy made all the speed he could, and Quilp led onward, constantly turning back to threaten him, and urge him to greater haste. Nell did not dare to move until they were out of sight and hearing, and then hurried to where she had left her grandfather, feeling as if the very passing of the dwarf so near him must have filled him with alarm and terror. But he was sleeping soundly, and she softly withdrew.

As she was making her way to her own bed, she determined to say nothing of this adventure, as, upon whatever errand the dwarf had come (and she feared it must have been in search of them), it was clear, by his inquiry about the London coach, that he was on his way homeward, and, as he had passed through that place, it was but reasonable to suppose that they were safer from his inquiries there than they could be elsewhere. These reflections did not remove her own alarm, for she had been too much terrified to be easily composed, and felt as if she were hemmed in by a legion of Quilps, and the very air itself were filled with them.

The delight of the Nobility and Gentry and the patronised of Royalty had, by some process of self-abridgment known only to herself, got into her travelling bed, where she was snoring peacefully, while the large bonnet, carefully disposed upon the drum, was revealing its glories by the light of a dim lamp that swung from the roof. The child's bed was already made upon the floor, and it was a great comfort to her to hear the steps removed as soon as she had entered, and to know that all easy communication between persons outside and the brass knocker was by this means effectually prevented. Certain guttural sounds, too, which from time to time ascended through the floor of the caravan, and a rustling of straw in the same direction, apprised her that the driver was couched upon the ground beneath, and gave her an additional feeling of security.

Notwithstanding these protections, she could get none but broken sleep by fits and starts all night, for fear of Quilp, who throughout her uneasy dreams was somehow connected with the wax-work, or was wax-work himself, or was Mrs. Jarley and wax-work too, or was himself, Mrs. Jarley, wax-work, and a barrel-organ all in one, and yet not exactly any of them either. At length, towards break of day, that deep sleep came upon her which succeeds to weariness and overwatching, and which has no consciousness but one of overpowering and irresistible enjoyment.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

**S**LEEP hung upon the eyelids of the child so long, that, when she awoke, Mrs. Jarley was already decorated with her large bonnet, and actively engaged in preparing breakfast. She received Nell's apology for being so late with perfect good-humour, and said that she should not have roused her if she had slept on until noon.

"Because it does you good," said the lady of the caravan, "when you're tired, to sleep as long as ever you can, and get the fatigue quite off, and that's another blessing of your time of life—you can sleep so very sound."

"Have you had a bad night, ma'am?" asked Nell.

"I seldom have anything else, child," replied Mrs. Jarley with the air of a martyr. "I sometimes wonder how I bear it."

Remembering the snores which had proceeded from that cleft in the caravan in which the proprietress of the wax-work passed the night, Nell rather thought she must have been dreaming of lying awake. However, she expressed herself very sorry to hear such a dismal account of her state of health, and shortly afterwards sat down with her grandfather and Mrs. Jarley to breakfast. The meal finished, Nell assisted to wash the cups and saucers, and put them in their proper places, and these household duties performed, Mrs. Jarley arrayed herself in an exceedingly bright shawl for the purpose of making a progress through the streets of the town.

"The wan will come on to bring the boxes," said Mrs. Jarley, "and you had better come in it, child. I am obliged to walk, very much against my will: but the people expect it of me, and public characters can't be their own masters and mistresses in such matters as these. How do I look, child?"

Nell returned a satisfactory reply, and Mrs. Jarley, after sticking a great many pins into various parts of her figure, and making several abortive attempts to obtain a full view of her own back, was at last satisfied with her appearance, and went forth majestically.

The caravan followed at no great distance. As it went jolting through the streets, Nell peeped from the window, curious to see in what kind of place they were, and yet fearful of encountering at every turn the dreaded face of Quilp. It was a pretty large town, with an open square which they were crawling slowly across, and in the middle of which was the Town-hall,

with a clock tower and a weather-cock. There were houses of stone, houses of red brick, houses of yellow brick, houses of lath and plaster; and houses of wood, many of them very old, with withered faces carved upon the beams, and staring down into the street. These had very little winking windows, and low arched doors, and, in some of the narrower ways, quite overhanging the pavement. The streets were very clean, very sunny, very empty, and very dull. A few idle men lounged about the two inns, and the empty market-place, and the tradesmen's doors, and some old people were dozing in chairs outside an almshouse wall; but scarcely any passengers who seemed bent on going anywhere, or to have any object in view, went by; and if perchance some straggler did, his footsteps echoed on the hot bright pavement for minutes afterwards. Nothing seemed to be going on but the clocks, and they had such drowsy faces, such heavy lazy hands, and such cracked voices, that they surely must have been too slow. The very dogs were all asleep, and the flies, drunk with moist sugar in the grocer's shop, forgot their wings and briskness, and baked to death in dusty corners of the window.

Rumbling along with most unwonted noise, the caravan stopped at last at the place of exhibition, where Nell dismounted amidst an admiring group of children, who evidently supposed her to be an important item of the curiosities, and were fully impressed with the belief that her grandfather was a cunning device in wax. The chests were taken out with all convenient dispatch, and taken in to be unlocked by Mrs. Jarley, who, attended by George and another man in velveteen shorts and a drab hat ornamented with turnpike tickets, were waiting to dispose their contents (consisting of red festoons and other ornamental devices in upholstery work) to the best advantage in the decoration of the room.

They all got to work without loss of time, and very busy they were. As the stupendous collection were yet concealed by cloths, lest the envious dust should injure their complexions, Nell bestirred herself to assist in the embellishment of the room, in which her grandfather also was of great service. The two men, being well used to it, did a great deal in a short time; and Mrs. Jarley served out the tin tacks from a linen pocket like a toll-collector's which she wore for the purpose, and encouraged her assistants to renewed exertion.

While they were thus employed, a tallish gentleman with a hook nose and black hair, dressed in a military surtout very short and tight in the

sleeves, and which had once been frogged and braided all over, but was now sadly shorn of its garniture and quite threadbare—dressed, too, in ancient grey pantaloons fitting tight to the leg, and a pair of pumps in the winter of their existence—looked in at the door, and smiled affably. Mrs. Jarley's back being then towards him, the military gentleman shook his forefinger as a sign that her myrmidons were not to apprise her of his presence, and stealing up close behind her, tapped her on the neck, and cried playfully "Boh!"

"What, Mr. Slum!" cried the lady of the wax-work. "Lor! who'd have thought of seeing you here?"

"'Pon my soul and honour," said Mr. Slum, "that's a good remark. 'Pon my soul and honour that's a wise remark. Who *would* have thought it? George, my faithful feller, how are you?"

George received this advance with a surly indifference, observing that he was well enough for the matter of that, and hammering lustily all the time.

"I came here," said the military gentleman, turning to Mrs. Jarley,—"'pon my soul and honour I hardly know what I came here for. It would puzzle me to tell you, it would by Gad. I wanted a little inspiration, a little freshening up, a little change of ideas, and——'Pon my soul and honour," said the military gentleman, checking himself and looking round the room, "what a devilish classical thing this is! By Gad, it's quite Minervian!"

"It'll look well enough when it comes to be finished," observed Mrs. Jarley.

"Well enough!" said Mr. Slum. "Will you believe me when I say it's the delight of my life to have dabbled in poetry, when I think I've exercised my pen upon this charming theme? By the way—any orders? Is there any little thing I can do for you?"

"It comes so very expensive, sir," replied Mrs. Jarley, "and I really don't think it does much good."

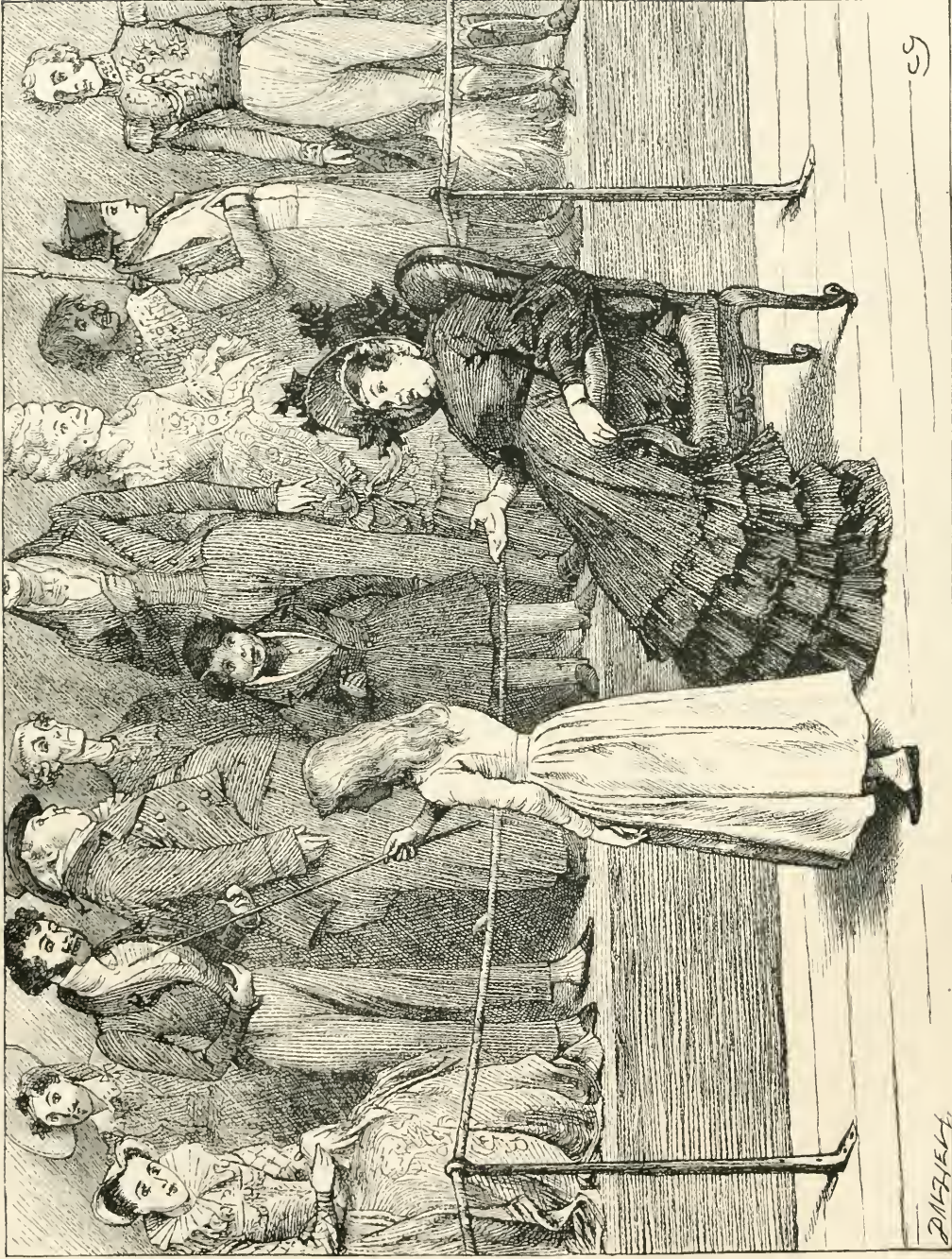
"Hush! No, no!" returned Mr. Slum, elevating his hand. "No fibs. I'll not hear it. Don't say it don't do good. Don't say it. I know better!"

"I don't think it does," said Mrs. Jarley.

"Ha, ha!" cried Mr. Slum, "you're giving way, you're coming down. Ask the perfumers, ask the blacking-makers, ask the hatters, ask the old lottery-office keepers—ask any man among 'em what my poetry has done for him, and mark my words, he blesses the name of Slum. If he's an honest man, he raises his eyes







"THAT, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN," SAID MRS. JARLEY, "IS JASPER PACKLEMERTON OF ATROCIOUS MEMORY."—P. 105

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to heaven, and blesses the name of Slum—mark that! You are acquainted with Westminster Abbey, Mrs. Jarley?"

"Yes, surely."

"Then upon my soul and honour, ma'am, you will find in a certain angle of that dreary pile, called Poet's Corner, a few smaller names than Slum," retorted that gentleman, tapping himself expressively on the forehead to imply that there was some slight quantity of brains behind it. "I've got a little trifle here now," said Mr. Slum, taking off his hat, which was full of scraps of paper, "a little trifle here, thrown off in the heat of the moment, which I should say was exactly the thing you wanted to set this place on fire with. It's an acrostic—the name at this moment is Warren, but the idea's a convertible one, and a positive inspiration for Jarley. Have the acrostic."

"I suppose it's very dear," said Mrs. Jarley.

"Five shillings," returned Mr. Slum, using his pencil as a toothpick. "Cheaper than any prose."

"I couldn't give more than three," said Mrs. Jarley.

"—And six," retorted Slum. "Come. Three-and-six."

Mrs. Jarley was not proof against the poet's insinuating manner, and Mr. Slum entered the order in a small note-book as a three-and-six-penny one. Mr. Slum then withdrew to alter the acrostic, after taking the most affectionate leave of his patroness, and promising to return as soon as he possibly could with a fair copy for the printer.

As his presence had not interfered with or interrupted the preparations, they were now far advanced, and were completed shortly after his departure. When the festoons were all put up as tastily as they might be, the stupendous collection was uncovered, and there were displayed on a raised platform some two feet from the floor, running round the room and parted from the rude public by a crimson rope breast high, divers sprightly effigies of celebrated characters, singly and in groups, clad in glittering dresses of various climes and times, and standing more or less unsteadily upon their legs, with their eyes very wide open, and their nostrils very much inflated, and the muscles of their legs and arms very strongly developed, and all their countenances expressing great surprise. All the gentlemen were very pigeon-breasted and very blue about the beards; and all the ladies were miraculous figures; and all the ladies and all the gentlemen were looking intensely nowhere, and staring with extraordinary earnestness at nothing.

When Nell had exhausted her first raptures at this glorious sight, Mrs. Jarley ordered the room to be cleared of all but herself and the child, and, sitting herself down in an arm-chair in the centre, formally invested Nell with a willow wand, long used by herself for pointing out the characters, and was at great pains to instruct her in her duty.

"That," said Mrs. Jarley in her exhibition tone, as Nell touched a figure at the beginning of the platform, "is an unfortunate Maid of Honour, in the time of Queen Elizabeth, who died from pricking her finger in consequence of working upon a Sunday. Observe the blood which is trickling from her finger; also the gold-eyed needle of the period, with which she is at work."

All this Nell repeated twice or thrice: pointing to the finger and the needle at the right times: and then passed on to the next.

"That, ladies and gentlemen," said Mrs. Jarley, "is Jasper Packlemerton of atrocious memory, who courted and married fourteen wives, and destroyed them all, by tickling the soles of their feet when they were sleeping in the consciousness of innocence and virtue. On being brought to the scaffold and asked if he was sorry for what he had done, he replied yes, he was sorry for having let 'em off so easy, and hoped all Christian husbands would pardon him the offence. Let this be a warning to all young ladies to be particular in the character of the gentlemen of their choice. Observe that his fingers are curled as if in the act of tickling, and that his face is represented with a wink, as he appeared when committing his barbarous murders."

When Nell knew all about Mr. Packlemerton, and could say it without faltering, Mrs. Jarley passed on to the fat man, and then to the thin man, the tall man, the short man, the old lady who died of dancing at a hundred and thirty-two, the wild boy of the woods, the woman who poisoned fourteen families with pickled walnuts, and other historical characters and interesting but misguided individuals. And so well did Nell profit by her instructions, and so apt was she to remember them, that, by the time they had been shut up together for a couple of hours, she was in full possession of the history of the whole establishment, and perfectly competent to the enlightenment of visitors.

Mrs. Jarley was not slow to express her admiration at this happy result, and carried her young friend and pupil to inspect the remaining arrangements within doors, by virtue of which the passage had been already converted into a grove of

green baize hung with the inscriptions she had already seen (Mr. Slum's productions), and a highly-ornamented table placed at the upper end for Mrs. Jarley herself, at which she was to preside and take the money, in company with his Majesty King George the Third, Mr. Grimaldi as clown, Mary Queen of Scots, an anonymous gentleman of the Quaker persuasion, and Mr. Pitt holding in his hand a correct model of the bill for the imposition of the window duty. The preparations without doors had not been neglected either; a nun of great personal attractions was telling her beads on the little portico over the door; and a brigand with the blackest possible head of hair, and the clearest possible complexion, was at that moment going round the town in a cart, consulting the miniature of a lady.

It now only remained that Mr. Slum's compositions should be judiciously distributed; that the pathetic effusions should find their way to all private houses and tradespeople; and that the parody commencing "If I know'd a donkey," should be confined to the taverns, and circulated only among the lawyers' clerks and choice spirits of the place. When this had been done, and Mrs. Jarley had waited upon the boarding-schools in person, with a handbill composed expressly for them, in which it was distinctly proved that wax-work refined the mind, cultivated the taste, and enlarged the sphere of human understanding, that indefatigable lady sat down to dinner, and drank out of the suspicious bottle to a flourishing campaign.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

**U**NQUESTIONABLY Mrs. Jarley had an inventive genius. In the midst of the various devices for attracting visitors to the exhibition, little Nell was not forgotten. The light cart in which the Brigand usually made his perambulations being gaily dressed with flags and streamers, and the Brigand placed therein, contemplating the miniature of his beloved as usual, Nell was accommodated with a seat beside him, decorated with artificial flowers, and in this state and ceremony rode slowly through the town every morning, dispersing handbills from a basket, to the sound of drum and trumpet. The beauty of the child, coupled with her gentle and timid bearing, produced quite a sensation in the little country place. The Brigand, heretofore a source

of exclusive interest in the streets, became a mere secondary consideration, and to be important only as a part of the show of which she was the chief attraction. Grown-up folks began to be interested in the bright-eyed girl, and some score of little boys fell desperately in love, and constantly left enclosures of nuts and apples, directed in small-text, at the wax-work door.

This desirable impression was not lost on Mrs. Jarley, who, lest Nell should become too cheap, soon sent the Brigand out alone again, and kept her in the exhibition-room, where she described the figures every half-hour to the great satisfaction of admiring audiences. And these audiences were of a very superior description, including a great many young ladies' boarding-schools, whose favour Mrs. Jarley had been at great pains to conciliate, by altering the face and costume of Mr. Grimaldi as clown to represent Mr. Lindley Murray as he appeared when engaged in the composition of his English Grammar, and turning a murderess of great renown into Mrs. Hannah More—both of which likenesses were admitted by Miss Monflathers, who was at the head of the head Boarding and Day Establishment in the town, and who condescended to take a Private View with eight chosen young ladies, to be quite startling from their extreme correctness. Mr. Pitt in a nightcap and bedgown, and without his boots, represented the poet Cowper with perfect exactness; and Mary Queen of Scots in a dark wig, white shirt collar, and male attire, was such a complete image of Lord Byron that the young ladies quite screamed when they saw it. Miss Monflathers, however, rebuked this enthusiasm, and took occasion to reprove Mrs. Jarley for not keeping her collection more select: observing that his Lordship had held certain opinions quite incompatible with wax-work honours, and adding something about a Dean and Chapter, which Mrs. Jarley did not understand.

Although her duties were sufficiently laborious, Nell found in the lady of the caravan a very kind and considerate person, who had not only a peculiar relish for being comfortable herself, but for making everybody about her comfortable also; which latter taste, it may be remarked, is, even in persons who live in much finer places than caravans, a far more rare and uncommon one than the first, and is not by any means its necessary consequence. As her popularity procured her various little fees from the visitors on which her patroness never demanded any toll, and as her grandfather too was well treated and useful, she had no cause of anxiety in connection



with the wax-work, beyond that which sprung from her recollection of Quilp, and her fears that he might return, and one day suddenly encounter them.

Quilp, indeed, was a perpetual nightmare to the child, who was constantly haunted by a vision of his ugly face and stunted figure. She slept, for their better security, in the room where the wax-work figures were, and she never retired to this place at night but she tortured herself—she could not help it—with imagining a resemblance, in some one or other of their death-like faces, to the dwarf, and this fancy would sometimes so gain upon her that she would almost believe he had removed the figure and stood within the clothes. Then there were so many of them with their great glassy eyes—and, as they stood one behind the other all about her bed, they looked so like living creatures, and yet so unlike in their grim stillness and silence, that she had a kind of terror of them for their own sakes, and would often lie watching their dusky figures until she was obliged to rise and light a candle, or go and sit at the open window, and feel a companionship in the bright stars. At these times she would recall the old house, and the window at which she used to sit alone; and then she would think of poor Kit and all his kindness, until the tears came into her eyes, and she would weep and smile together.

Often and anxiously, at this silent hour, her thoughts reverted to her grandfather, and she would wonder how much he remembered of their former life, and whether he was ever really mindful of the change in their condition, and of their late helplessness and destitution. When they were wandering about, she seldom thought of this, but now she could not help considering what would become of them if he fell sick, or her own strength were to fail her. He was very patient and willing, happy to execute any little task, and glad to be of use; but he was in the same listless state, with no prospect of improvement—a mere child—a poor, thoughtless, vacant creature—a harmless, fond old man, susceptible of tender love and regard for her, and of pleasant and painful impressions, but alive to nothing more. It made her very sad to know that this was so—so sad to see it, that sometimes when he sat idly by, smiling and nodding to her when she looked round, or when he caressed some little child and carried it to and fro, as he was fond of doing by the hour together, perplexed by its simple questions, yet patient under his own infirmity, and seeming almost conscious of it too, and humbled even before the mind of an infant—so sad it made her to see him thus, that

she would burst into tears, and, withdrawing into some secret place, fall down upon her knees and pray that he might be restored.

But, the bitterness of her grief was not in beholding him in this condition, when he was at least content and tranquil, nor in her solitary meditations on his altered state, though these were trials for a young heart. Cause for deeper and heavier sorrow was yet to come.

One evening, a holiday night with them, Nell and her grandfather went out to walk. They had been rather closely confined for some days, and the weather being warm, they strolled a long distance. Clear of the town, they took a footpath which struck through some pleasant fields, judging that it would terminate in the road they quitted, and enable them to return that way. It made, however, a much wider circuit than they had supposed, and thus they were tempted onward until sunset, when they reached the track of which they were in search, and stopped to rest.

It had been gradually getting overcast, and now the sky was dark and lowering, save where the glory of the departing sun piled up masses of gold and burning fire, decaying embers of which gleamed here and there through the black veil, and shone redly down upon the earth. The wind began to moan in hollow murmurs, as the sun went down carrying glad day elsewhere; and a train of dull clouds, coming up against it, menaced thunder and lightning. Large drops of rain soon began to fall, and, as the storm clouds came sailing onward, others supplied the void they left behind, and spread over all the sky. Then was heard the low rumbling of distant thunder, then the lightning quivered, and then the darkness of an hour seemed to have gathered in an instant.

Fearful of taking shelter beneath a tree or hedge, the old man and the child hurried along the high-road, hoping to find some house in which they could seek a refuge from the storm, which had now burst forth in earnest, and every moment increased in violence. Drenched with the pelting rain, confused by the deafening thunder, and bewildered by the glare of the forked lightning, they would have passed a solitary house without being aware of its vicinity, had not a man, who was standing at the door, called lustily to them to enter.

“Your ears ought to be better than other folks’, at any rate, if you make so little of the chance of being struck blind,” he said, retreating from the door and shading his eyes with his hands as the jagged lightning came again. “What were you going past for, eh?” he added,

as he closed the door and led the way along a passage to a room behind.

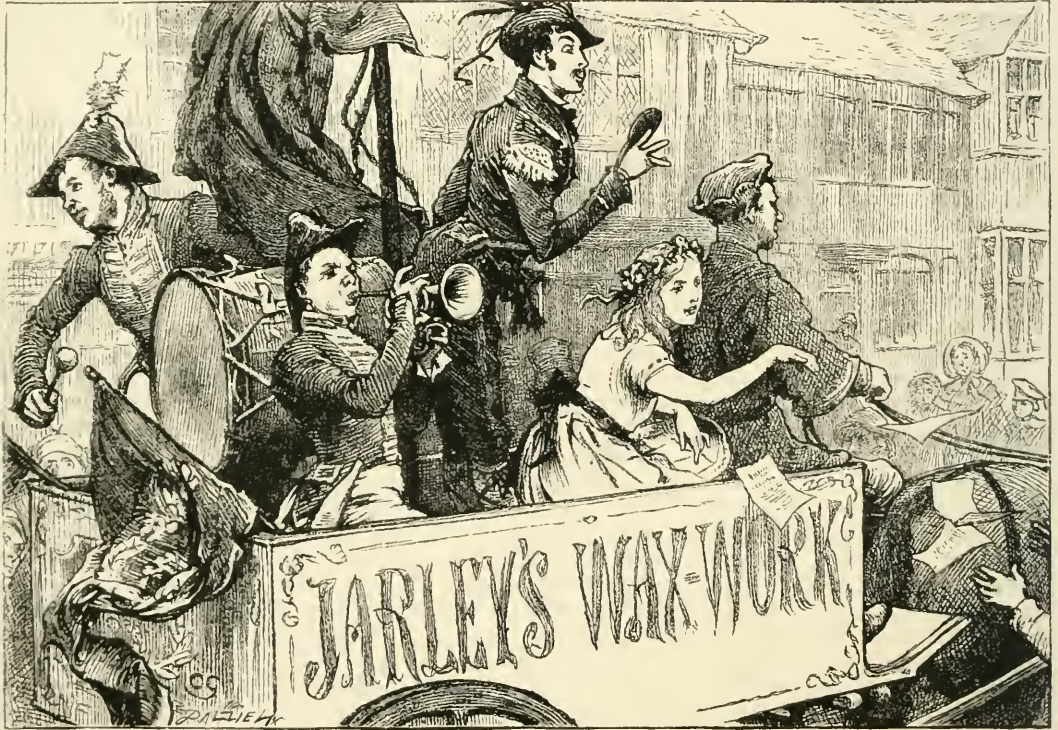
"We didn't see the house, sir, till we heard you calling," Nell replied.

"No wonder," said the man, "with this lightning in one's eyes, by-the-bye. You had better stand by the fire here, and dry yourselves a bit. You can call for what you like if you want anything. If you don't want anything, you're not obliged to give an order. Don't be afraid of that. This is a public-house, that's all.

The Valiant Soldier is pretty well known hereabouts."

"Is this house called the Valiant Soldier, sir?" asked Nell.

"I thought everybody knew that," replied the landlord. "Where have you come from, if you don't know the Valiant Soldier as well as the Church Catechism? This is the Valiant Soldier by James Groves,—Jem Groves—honest Jem Groves, as is a man of unblemished moral character, and has a good dry skittle-ground. If



"AND IN THIS STATE AND CEREMONY RODE SLOWLY THROUGH THE TOWN EVERY MORNING."

any man has got anything to say again Jem Groves, let him say it to Jem Groves, and Jem Groves can accommodate him with a customer on any terms from four pound a side to forty."

With these words, the speaker tapped himself on the waistcoat, to intimate that he was the Jem Groves so highly eulogised; sparred scientifically at a counterfeit Jem Groves, who was sparring at society in general from a black frame over the chimney-piece; and, applying a half-emptied glass of spirits-and-water to his lips, drank Jem Groves's health.

The night being warm, there was a large screen

drawn across the room, for a barrier against the heat of the fire. It seemed as if somebody on the other side of this screen had been insinuating doubts of Mr. Groves's prowess, and had thereby given rise to these egotistical expressions, for Mr. Groves wound up his defiance by giving a loud knock upon it with his knuckles, and pausing for a reply from the other side.

"There ain't many men," said Mr. Groves, no answer being returned, "who would venture to cross Jem Groves under his own roof. There's only one man, I know, that has nerve enough for that, and that man's not a hundred mile from



here neither. But he's worth a dozen men, and I let him say of me whatever he likes in consequence,—he knows that."

In return for this complimentary address, a very gruff hoarse voice bade Mr. Groves "hold his nose and light a candle." And the same voice remarked that the same gentleman "needn't waste his breath in brag, for most people knew pretty well what sort of stuff he was made of."

"Nell, they're—they're playing cards," whispered the old man, suddenly interested. "Don't you hear them?"

"Look sharp with that candle," said the voice; "it's as much as I can do to see the pips on the cards as it is; and get this shutter closed as quick as you can, will you? Your beer will be the worse for to-night's thunder I expect.—Game! Seven-and-sixpence to me, old Isaac. Hand over."

"Do you hear, Nell, do you hear them?" whispered the old man again, with increased earnestness, as the money chinked upon the table.

"I haven't seen such a storm as this," said a sharp cracked voice of most disagreeable quality, when a tremendous peal of thunder had died away, "since the night when old Luke Withers won thirteen times running on the red. We all said he had the Devil's luck and his own, and, as it was the kind of night for the Devil to be out and busy, I suppose he *was* looking over his shoulder, if anybody could have seen him."

"Ah!" returned the gruff voice, "for all old Luke's winning through thick and thin of late years, I remember the time when he was the unluckiest and unfortunatest of men. He never took a dice-box in his hand, or held a card, but he was plucked, pigeoned, and cleaned out completely."

"Do you hear what he says?" whispered the old man. "Do you hear that, Nell?"

The child saw with astonishment and alarm that his whole appearance had undergone a complete change. His face was flushed and eager, his eyes were strained, his teeth set, his breath came short and thick, and the hand he laid upon her arm trembled so violently that she shook beneath its grasp.

"Bear witness," he muttered, looking upward, "that I always said it; that I knew it, dreamed of it, felt it was the truth, and that it must be so! What money have we, Nell? Come! I saw you with money yesterday. What money have we? Give it to me."

"No, no, let me keep it, grandfather," said the frightened child. "Let us go away from here. Do not mind the rain. Pray let us go."

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP, 8.

"Give it to me, I say," returned the old man fiercely. "Hush, hush, don't cry, Nell. If I spoke sharply, dear, I didn't mean it. It's for thy good. I have wronged thee, Nell, but I will right thee yet, I will indeed. Where is the money?"

"Do not take it," said the child. "Pray do not take it, dear. For both our sakes let me keep it, or let me throw it away—better let me throw it away, than you take it now. Let us go; do let us go."

"Give me the money," returned the old man; "I must have it. There—there—that's my dear Nell. I'll right thee one day, child, I'll right thee, never fear!"

She took from her pocket a little purse. He seized it with the same rapid impatience which had characterised his speech, and hastily made his way to the other side of the screen. It was impossible to restrain him, and the trembling child followed close behind.

The landlord had placed a light upon the table, and was engaged in drawing the curtain of the window. The speakers whom they had heard were two men, who had a pack of cards and some silver money between them, while upon the screen itself the games they had played were scored in chalk. The man with the rough voice was a burly fellow of middle age, with large black whiskers, broad cheeks, a coarse wide mouth, and bull neck, which was pretty freely displayed, as his shirt collar was only confined by a loose red neckerchief. He wore his hat, which was of a brownish white, and had beside him a thick knotted stick. The other man, whom his companion had called Isaac, was of a more slender figure—stooping, and high in the shoulders—with a very ill-favoured face, and a most sinister and villainous squint.

"Now, old gentleman," said Isaac, looking round. "Do you know either of us? This side of the screen is private, sir."

"No offence, I hope," returned the old man.

"But by G—, sir, there *is* offence," said the other, interrupting him, "when you intrude yourself upon a couple of gentlemen who are particularly engaged."

"I had no intention to offend," said the old man, looking anxiously at the cards. "I thought that—"

"But you had no right to think, sir," retorted the other. "What the devil has a man at your time of life to do with thinking?"

"Now, bully boy," said the stout man, raising his eyes from his cards for the first time, "can't you let him speak?"

The landlord, who had apparently resolved to

remain neutral until he knew which side of the question the stout man would espouse, chimed in at this place with "Ah, to be sure, can't you let him speak, Isaac List?"

"Can't I let him speak?" sneered Isaac in reply, mimicking as nearly as he could, in his shrill voice, the tones of the landlord. "Yes, I can let him speak, Jemmy Groves."

"Well, then, do it, will you?" said the landlord.

Mr. List's squint assumed a portentous character, which seemed to threaten a prolongation of this controversy, when his companion, who had been looking sharply at the old man, put a timely stop to it.

"Who knows," said he with a cunning look, "but the gentleman may have civilly meant to ask if he might have the honour to take a hand with us?"

"I did mean it," cried the old man. "That is what I mean. That is what I want now!"

"I thought so," returned the same man. "Then who knows but the gentleman, anticipating our objection to play for love, civilly desired to play for money?"

The old man replied by shaking the little purse in his eager hand, and then throwing it down upon the table, and gathering up the cards as a miser would clutch at gold.

"Oh! That indeed——" said Isaac. "If that's what the gentleman meant, I beg the gentleman's pardon. Is this the gentleman's little purse? A very pretty little purse. Rather a light purse," added Isaac, throwing it into the air and catching it dexterously, "but enough to amuse a gentleman for half an hour or so."

"We'll make a four-handed game of it, and take in Groves," said the stout man. "Come, Jemmy."

The landlord, who conducted himself like one who was well used to such little parties, approached the table and took his seat. The child, in a perfect agony, drew her grandfather aside, and implored him, even then, to come away.

"Come; and we may be so happy," said the child.

"We *will* be happy," replied the old man hastily. "Let me go, Nell. The means of happiness are on the cards and in the dice. We must rise from little winnings to great. There's little to be won here; but great will come in time. I shall but win back my own, and it's all for thee, my darling."

"God help us!" cried the child. "Oh! what hard fortune brought us here?"

"Hush!" rejoined the old man, laying his

hand upon her mouth. "Fortune will not bear chiding. We must not reproach her, or she shuns us; I have found that out."

"Now, mister," said the stout man. "If you're not coming yourself, give us the cards, will you?"

"I am coming," cried the old man. "Sit thee down, Nell, sit thee down and look on. Be of good heart, it's all for thee—all—every penny. I don't tell them, no, no, or else they wouldn't play, dreading the chance that such a cause must give me. Look at them, see what they are, and what thou art. Who doubts that we must win?"

"The gentleman has thought better of it, and isn't coming," said Isaac, making as though he would rise from the table. "I'm sorry the gentleman's daunted—nothing venture, nothing have—but the gentleman knows best."

"Why, I am ready. You have all been slow but me," said the old man. "I wonder who's more anxious to begin than I."

As he spoke he drew a chair to the table; and the other three closing round it at the same time, the game commenced.

The child sat by, and watched its progress with a troubled mind. Regardless of the run of luck, and mindful only of the desperate passion which had its hold upon her grandfather, losses and gains were to her alike. Exulting in some brief triumph, or cast down by a defeat, there he sat so wild and restless, so feverishly and intensely anxious, so terribly eager, so ravenous for the paltry stakes, that she could have almost better borne to see him dead. And yet she was the innocent cause of all this torture, and he, gambling with such a savage thirst for gain as the most insatiable gambler never felt, had not one selfish thought!

On the contrary, the other three—knaves and gamblers by their trade—while intent upon their game, were yet as cool and quiet as if every virtue had been centred in their breasts. Sometimes one would look up to smile to another, or to snuff the feeble candle, or to glance at the lightning as it shot through the open window and fluttering curtain, or to listen to some louder peal of thunder than the rest, with a kind of momentary impatience, as if it put him out; but there they sat, with a calm indifference to everything but their cards, perfect philosophers in appearance, and with no greater show of passion or excitement than if they had been made of stone.

The storm had raged for full three hours; the lightning had grown fainter and less frequent; the thunder, from seeming to roll and break above



their heads, had gradually died away into a deep hoarse distance; and still the game went on, and still the anxious child was quite forgotten.

## CHAPTER XXX.

**A**T length the play came to an end, and Mr. Isaac List rose the only winner. Mat and the landlord bore their losses with professional fortitude. Isaac pocketed his gains with the air of a man who had quite made up his mind to win all along, and was neither surprised nor pleased.

Nell's little purse was exhausted; but, although it lay empty by his side, and the other players had now risen from the table, the old man sat poring over the cards, dealing them as they had been dealt before, and turning up the different hands to see what each man would have held if they had still been playing. He was quite absorbed in this occupation, when the child drew near and laid her hand upon his shoulder, telling him it was near midnight.

"See the curse of poverty, Nell," he said, pointing to the packs he had spread out upon the table. "If I could have gone on a little longer, only a little longer, the luck would have turned on my side. Yes, it's as plain as the marks upon the cards. See here—and there—and here again."

"Put them away," urged the child. "Try to forget them."

"Try to forget them!" he rejoined, raising his haggard face to hers, and regarding her with an incredulous stare. "To forget them! How are we ever to grow rich if I forget them?"

The child could only shake her head.

"No, no, Nell," said the old man, patting her cheek; "they must not be forgotten. We must make amends for this as soon as we can. Patience—patience, and we'll right thee yet, I promise thee. Lose to-day, win to-morrow. And nothing can be won without anxiety and care—nothing. Come, I am ready."

"Do you know what the time is?" said Mr. Groves, who was smoking with his friends. "Past twelve o'clock—"

"—And a rainy night," added the stout man.

"The Valiant Soldier, by James Groves. Good Beds. Cheap entertainment for man and beast," said Mr. Groves, quoting his sign-board. "Half-past twelve o'clock."

"It's very late," said the uneasy child. "I wish we had gone before. What will they think of us? It will be two o'clock by the time we get back. What would it cost, sir, if we stopped here?"

"Two good beds, one-and-sixpence; supper and beer, one shilling; total, two shillings and sixpence," replied the Valiant Soldier.

Now, Nell had still the piece of gold sewn in her dress; and when she came to consider the lateness of the hour, and the somnolent habits of Mrs. Jarley, and to imagine the state of consternation in which they would certainly throw that good lady by knocking her up in the middle of the night—and when she reflected, on the other hand, that if they remained where they were, and rose early in the morning, they might get back before she awoke, and could plead the violence of the storm by which they had been overtaken as a good apology for their absence—she decided, after a great deal of hesitation, to remain. She therefore took her grandfather aside, and telling him that she had still enough left to defray the cost of their lodging, proposed that they should stay there for the night.

"If I had had but that money before! If I had only known of it a few minutes ago!" muttered the old man.

"We will decide to stop here if you please," said Nell, turning hastily to the landlord.

"I think that's prudent," returned Mr. Groves. "You shall have your suppers directly."

Accordingly, when Mr. Groves had smoked his pipe out, knocked out the ashes, and placed it carefully in a corner of the fire-place, with the bowl downwards, he brought in the bread and cheese, and beer, with many high encomiums upon their excellence, and bade his guests fall to, and make themselves at home. Nell and her grandfather ate sparingly, for both were occupied with their own reflections: the other gentlemen, for whose constitutions beer was too weak and tame a liquid, consoled themselves with spirits and tobacco.

As they would leave the house very early in the morning, the child was anxious to pay for their entertainment before they retired to bed. But as she felt the necessity of concealing her little hoard from her grandfather, and had to change the piece of gold, she took it secretly from its place of concealment, and embraced an opportunity of following the landlord when he went out of the room, and tendered it to him in the little bar.

"Will you give me the change here, if you please?" said the child.

Mr. James Groves was evidently surprised, and looked at the money, and rung it, and looked at the child, and at the money again, as though he had a mind to inquire how she came by it. The coin being genuine, however, and changed at his house, he probably felt, like a wise landlord, that it was no business of his. At any

rate, he counted out the change, and gave it her. The child was returning to the room where they had passed the evening, when she fancied she saw a figure just gliding in at the door. There was nothing but a long dark passage between this door and the place where she had changed the money, and, being very certain that no person had passed in or out while she stood there, the thought struck her that she had been watched.

But by whom? When she re-entered the room, she found its inmates exactly as she had left them. The stout fellow lay upon two chairs, resting his head on his hand, and the squinting man reposed in a similar attitude on the opposite side of the table. Between them sat her grandfather, looking intently at the winner with a kind of hungry admiration, and hanging upon his words as if he were some superior being. She was puzzled for a moment, and looked round to see if any one else was there. No. Then she asked her grandfather in a whisper whether anybody had left the room while she was absent. "No," he said, "nobody."

It must have been her fancy, then; and yet it was strange that, without anything in her previous thoughts to lead to it, she should have imagined this figure so very distinctly. She was still wondering and thinking of it, when a girl came to light her to bed.

The old man took leave of the company at the same time, and they went up-stairs together. It was a great rambling house, with dull corridors and wide staircases, which the flaring candles seemed to make more gloomy. She left her grandfather in his chamber, and followed her guide to another, which was at the end of a passage, and approached by some half-dozen crazy steps. This was prepared for her. The girl lingered a little while to talk, and tell her grievances. She had not a good place, she said; the wages were low, and the work was hard. She was going to leave it in a fortnight; the child couldn't recommend her to another, she supposed? Indeed, she was afraid another would be difficult to get after living there, for the house had a very indifferent character; there was far too much card-playing, and such-like. She was very much mistaken if some of the people who came there oftenest were quite as honest as they might be, but she wouldn't have it known that she had said so, for the world. Then there were some rambling allusions to a rejected sweet-heart, who had threatened to go a soldiering—a final promise of knocking at the door early in the morning—and "Good night."

The child did not feel comfortable when she was left alone. She could not help thinking of

the figure stealing through the passage down-stairs; and what the girl had said did not tend to reassure her. The men were very ill-looking. They might get their living by robbing and murdering travellers. Who could tell?

Reasoning herself out of these fears, or losing sight of them for a little while, there came the anxiety to which the adventures of the night gave rise. Here was the old passion awakened again in her grandfather's breast, and to what further distraction it might tempt him Heaven only knew. What fears their absence might have occasioned already! Persons might be seeking for them even then. Would they be forgiven in the morning, or turned adrift again? Oh! why had they stopped in that strange place? It would have been better, under any circumstances, to have gone on!

At last, sleep gradually stole upon her—a broken, fitful sleep, troubled by dreams of falling from high towers, and waking with a start and in great terror. A deeper slumber followed this—and then—— What? That figure in the room!

A figure was there. Yes, she had drawn up the blind to admit the light when it should dawn, and there, between the foot of the bed and the dark casement, it crouched and slunk along, groping its way with noiseless hands, and stealing round the bed. She had no voice to cry for help, no power to move, but lay still, watching it.

On it came—on, silently and stealthily, to the bed's head. The breath so near her pillow, that she shrunk back into it, lest those wandering hands should light upon her face. Back again it stole to the window—then turned its head towards her.

The dark form was a mere blot upon the lighter darkness of the room, but she saw the turning of the head, and felt and knew how the eyes looked and the ears listened. There it remained, motionless as she. At length, still keeping the face towards her, it busied its hands in something, and she heard the chink of money.

Then, on it came again, silent and stealthy as before, and replacing the garments it had taken from the bedside, dropped upon its hands and knees, and crawled away. How slowly it seemed to move, now that she could hear but not see it, creeping along the floor! It reached the door at last, and stood upon its feet. The steps creaked beneath its noiseless tread, and it was gone.

The first impulse of the child was to fly from the terror of being by herself in that room—to have somebody by—not to be alone—and then her power of speech would be restored. With no consciousness of having moved, she gained the door.



There was the dreadful shadow, pausing at the bottom of the steps.

She could not pass it ; she might have done so, perhaps, in the darkness, without being seized, but her blood curdled at the thought. The figure stood quite still, and so did she ; not boldly, but of necessity ; for going back into the room was hardly less terrible than going on.

The rain beat fast and furiously without, and ran down in plashing streams from the thatched roof. Some summer insect, with no escape into the air, flew blindly to and fro, beating its body against the walls and ceiling, and filling the silent place with murmurs. The figure moved again. The child involuntarily did the same. Once in her grandfather's room, she would be safe.

It crept along the passage until it came to the very door she longed so ardently to reach. The child, in the agony of being so near, had almost darted forward with the design of bursting into the room and closing it behind her, when the figure stopped again.

The idea flashed suddenly upon her—what if it entered there, and had a design upon the old man's life ? She turned faint and sick. It did. It went in. There was a light inside. The figure was now within the chamber, and she, still dumb—quite dumb, and almost senseless—stood looking on.

The door was partly open. Not knowing what she meant to do, but meaning to preserve him or be killed herself, she staggered forward and looked in.

What sight was that which met her view ?

The bed had not been lain on, but was smooth and empty. And at a table sat the old man himself ; the only living creature there ; his white face pinched and sharpened by the greediness which made his eyes unnaturally bright—counting the money of which his hands had robbed her.

### CHAPTER XXXI.

**W**ITH steps more faltering and unsteady than those with which she had approached the room, the child withdrew from the door, and groped her way back to her own chamber. The terror she had lately felt was nothing compared with that which now oppressed her. No strange robber, no treacherous host conniving at the plunder of his guests, or stealing to their beds to kill them in their sleep, no nightly prowler, however terrible and cruel, could have awakened in her bosom

half the dread which the recognition of her silent visitor inspired. The grey-headed old man gliding like a ghost into her room and acting the thief while he supposed her fast asleep, then bearing off his prize and hanging over it with the ghastly exultation she had witnessed, was worse—immeasurably worse, and far more dreadful, for the moment, to reflect upon—than anything her wildest fancy could have suggested. If he should return—there was no lock or bolt upon the door, and if, distrustful of having left some money yet behind, he should come back to seek for more—a vague awe and horror surrounded the idea of his slinking in again with stealthy tread, and turning his face toward the empty bed, while she shrank down close at his feet to avoid his touch, which was almost insupportable. She sat and listened. Hark ! A footstep on the stairs, and now the door was slowly opening. It was but imagination, yet imagination had all the terrors of reality ; nay, it was worse, for the reality would have come and gone, and there an end, but in imagination it was always coming, and never went away.

The feeling which beset the child was one of dim uncertain horror. She had no fear of the dear old grandfather, in whose love for her this disease of the brain had been engendered ; but the man she had seen that night, wrapped in the game of chance, lurking in her room, and counting the money by the glimmering light, seemed like another creature in his shape, a monstrous distortion of his image, a something to recoil from, and be the more afraid of, because it bore a likeness to him, and kept close about her, as he did. She could scarcely connect her own affectionate companion, save by his loss, with this old man, so like, yet so unlike him. She had wept to see him dull and quiet. How much greater cause she had for weeping now !

The child sat watching and thinking of these things, until the phantom in her mind so increased in gloom and terror, that she felt it would be a relief to hear the old man's voice, or, if he were asleep, even to see him, and banish some of the fears that clustered round his image. She stole down the stairs and passage again. The door was still ajar as she had left it, and the candle burning as before.

She had her own candle in her hand, prepared to say, if he were waking, that she was uneasy and could not rest, and had come to see if his were still alight. Looking into the room, she saw him lying calmly on his bed, and so took courage to enter.

Fast asleep—no passion in the face, no avarice, no anxiety, no wild desire ; all gentle, tranquil,

and at peace. This was not the gambler, or the shadow in her room; this was not even the worn and jaded man whose face had so often met her own in the grey morning light; this was her dear old friend, her harmless fellow-traveller, her good, kind grandfather.

She had no fear as she looked upon his slumbering features, but she had a deep and weighty sorrow, and it found its relief in tears.

"God bless him!" said the child, stooping softly to kiss his placid cheek. "I see too well now that they would indeed part us if they found us out, and shut him up from the light of the sun and sky. He has only me to help him. God bless us both!"

Lighting her candle, she retreated as silently as she had come, and gaining her own room once more, sat up during the remainder of that long, long, miserable night.

At last the day turned her waning candle pale, and she fell asleep. She was quickly roused by the girl who had shown her up to bed; and, as soon as she was dressed, prepared to go down to her grandfather. But first she searched her pocket, and found that her money was all gone—not a sixpence remained.

The old man was ready, and in a few seconds they were on their road. The child thought he rather avoided her eye, and appeared to expect that she would tell him of her loss. She felt she must do that, or he might suspect the truth.

"Grandfather," she said in a tremulous voice, after they had walked about a mile in silence, "do you think they are honest people at the house yonder?"

"Why?" returned the old man, trembling. "Do I think them honest? Yes, they played honestly."

"I'll tell you why I ask," rejoined Nell. "I lost some money last night—out of my bedroom I am sure. Unless it was taken by somebody in jest—only in jest, dear grandfather, which would make me laugh heartily if I could but know it—"

"Who would take money in jest?" returned the old man in a hurried manner. "Those who take money, take it to keep. Don't talk of jest."

"Then it was stolen out of my room, dear," said the child, whose last hope was destroyed by the manner of this reply.

"But is there no more, Nell?" said the old man; "no more anywhere? Was it all taken—every farthing of it—was there nothing left?"

"Nothing," replied the child.

"We must get more," said the old man, "we must earn it, Nell, hoard it up, scrape it together,

come by it somehow. Never mind this loss. Tell nobody of it, and perhaps we may regain it. Don't ask how;—we may regain it, and a great deal more; but tell nobody, or trouble may come of it. And so they took it out of thy room, when thou wert asleep!" he added in a compassionate tone, very different from the secret, cunning way in which he had spoken until now. "Poor Nell, poor little Nell!"

The child hung down her head and wept. The sympathising tone in which he spoke was quite sincere; she was sure of that. It was not the lightest part of her sorrow to know that this was done for her.

"Not a word about it to any one but me," said the old man; "no, not even to me," he added hastily, "for it can do no good. All the losses that ever were are not worth tears from thy eyes, darling. Why should they be, when we will win them back?"

"Let them go," said the child, looking up. "Let them go, once and for ever, and I would never shed another tear if every penny had been a thousand pounds."

"Well, well," returned the old man, checking himself as some impetuous answer rose to his lips, "she knows no better. I should be thankful for it."

"But listen to me," said the child earnestly. "Will you listen to me?"

"Ay, ay, I'll listen," returned the old man, still without looking at her; "a pretty voice! It has always a sweet sound to me. It always had when it was her mother's, poor child!"

"Let me persuade you, then—oh! do let me persuade you," said the child, "to think no more of gains or losses, and to try no fortune but the fortune we pursue together."

"We pursue this aim together," retorted her grandfather, still looking away, and seeming to confer with himself. "Whose image sanctifies the game?"

"Have we been worse off," resumed the child, "since you forgot these cares, and we have been travelling on together? Have we not been much better and happier without a home to shelter us than ever we were in that unhappy house, when they were on your mind?"

"She speaks the truth," murmured the old man in the same tone as before. "It must not turn me, but it is the truth—no doubt it is."

"Only remember what we have been since that bright morning when we turned our backs upon it for the last time," said Nell, "only remember what we have been since we have been free of all those miseries—what peaceful days and quiet nights we have had—what plea-



sant times we have known—what happiness we have enjoyed. If we have been tired or hungry, we have been soon refreshed, and slept the sounder for it. Think what beautiful things we have seen, and how contented we have felt. And why was this blessed change?"

He stopped her with a motion of his hand, and bade her talk to him no more just then, for he was busy. After a time he kissed her cheek, still motioning her to silence, and walked on looking far before him, and sometimes stopping and gazing with a puckered brow upon the ground, as if he were painfully trying to collect his disordered thoughts. Once she saw tears in his eyes. When he had gone on thus for some time, he took her hand in his as he was accustomed to do, with nothing of the violence or animation of his late manner; and so, by degrees so fine that the child could not trace them, settled down into his usual quiet way, and suffered her to lead him where she would.

When they presented themselves in the midst of the stupendous collection, they found, as Nell had anticipated, that Mrs. Jarley was not yet out of bed, and that, although she had suffered some uneasiness on their account overnight, and had, indeed, sat up for them until past eleven o'clock, she had retired in the persuasion that, being overtaken by storm at some distance from home, they had sought the nearest shelter, and would not return before morning. Nell immediately applied herself with great assiduity to the decoration and preparation of the room, and had the satisfaction of completing her task, and dressing herself neatly, before the beloved of the Royal Family came down to breakfast.

"We haven't had," said Mrs. Jarley when the meal was over, "more than eight of Miss Monflathers's young ladies all the time we've been here, and there's twenty-six of 'em, as I was told by the cook when I asked her a question or two, and put her on the free-list. We must try 'em with a parcel of new bills, and you shall take it, my dear, and see what effect that has upon 'em."

The proposed expedition being one of paramount importance, Mrs. Jarley adjusted Nell's bonnet with her own hands, and declaring that she certainly did look very pretty, and reflected credit on the establishment, dismissed her with many commendations, and certain needful directions as to the turnings on the right which she was to take, and the turnings on the left which she was to avoid. Thus instructed, Nell had no difficulty in finding out Miss Monflathers's Boarding and Day Establishment, which was a large house, with a high wall, and a large garden-gate with a large brass plate, and a small grating

through which Miss Monflathers's parlour-maid inspected all visitors before admitting them; for nothing in the shape of a man—no, not even a milkman—was suffered, without special licence, to pass that gate. Even the tax-gatherer, who was stout, and wore spectacles and a broad-brimmed hat, had the taxes handed through the grating. More obdurate than gate of adamant or brass, this gate of Miss Monflathers's frowned on all mankind. The very butcher respected it as a gate of mystery, and left off whistling when he rang the bell.

As Nell approached the awful door, it turned slowly upon its hinges with a creaking noise, and, forth from the solemn grove beyond, came a long file of young ladies, two and two, all with open books in their hands, and some with parasols likewise. And last of the goodly procession came Miss Monflathers, bearing herself a parasol of lilac silk, and supported by two smiling teachers, each mortally envious of the other, and devoted unto Miss Monflathers.

Confused by the looks and whispers of the girls, Nell stood with downcast eyes and suffered the procession to pass on, until Miss Monflathers, bringing up the rear, approached her, when she curtsied and presented her little packet; on receipt whereof Miss Monflathers commanded that the line should halt.

"You're the wax-work child, are you not?" said Miss Monflathers.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Nell, colouring deeply, for the young ladies had collected about her, and she was the centre on which all eyes were fixed.

"And don't you think you must be a very wicked little child," said Miss Monflathers, who was of rather uncertain temper, and lost no opportunity of impressing moral truths upon the tender minds of the young ladies, "to be a wax-work child at all?"

Poor Nell had never viewed her position in this light, and not knowing what to say, remained silent, blushing more deeply than before.

"Don't you know," said Miss Monflathers, "that it's very naughty and unfeminine, and a perversion of the properties wisely and benignantly transmitted to us, with expansive powers to be roused from their dormant state through the medium of cultivation?"

The two teachers murmured their respectful approval of this home-thrust, and looked at Nell as though they would have said that there indeed Miss Monflathers had hit her very hard. Then they smiled and glanced at Miss Monflathers, and then, their eyes meeting, they exchanged looks which plainly said that each considered herself smiler in ordinary to Miss Monflathers,

and regarded the other as having no right to smile, and that her so doing was an act of presumption and impertinence.

"Don't you feel how naughty it is of you," resumed Miss Monflathers, "to be a wax-work child, when you might have the proud con-

sciousness of assisting, to the extent of your infant powers, the manufactures of your country; of improving your mind by the constant contemplation of the steam-engine; and of earning a comfortable and independent subsistence of from two-and-ninence to three shillings per



"YOU'RE THE WAX-WORK CHILD, ARE YOU NOT?"

week? Don't you know that the harder you are at work, the happier you are?"

"How doth the little——?" murmured one of the teachers, in quotation from Doctor Watts.

"Eh?" said Miss Monflathers, turning smartly round. "Who said that?"

Of course the teacher who had not said it indicated the rival who had, whom Miss Monflathers frowningly requested to hold her peace; by that means throwing the informing teacher into raptures of joy.

"The little busy bee," said Miss Monflathers,



drawing herself up, "is applicable only to genteel children.

'In books, or work, or healthful play,'

is quite right as far as they are concerned; and the work means painting on velvet, fancy needle-work, or embroidery. In such cases as these," pointing to Nell with her parasol, "and in the case of all poor people's children, we should read it thus:

'In work, work, work. In work alway  
Let my first years be past,  
That I may give for ev'ry day  
Some good account at last.'

A deep hum of applause rose not only from the two teachers, but from all the pupils, who were equally astonished to hear Miss Monflathers improvising after this brilliant style; for although she had been long known as a politician, she had never appeared before as an original poet. Just then somebody happened to discover that Nell was crying, and all eyes were again turned towards her.

There were indeed tears in her eyes, and drawing out her handkerchief to brush them away, she happened to let it fall. Before she could stoop to pick it up, one young lady of about fifteen or sixteen, who had been standing a little apart from the others, as though she had no recognised place among them, sprang forward and put it in her hand. She was gliding timidly away again, when she was arrested by the governess.

"It was Miss Edwards who did that, I *know*," said Miss Monflathers predictively. "Now I am sure that was Miss Edwards."

It was Miss Edwards, and everybody said it was Miss Edwards, and Miss Edwards herself admitted that it was.

"Is it not," said Miss Monflathers, putting down her parasol to take a severer view of the offender, "a most remarkable thing, Miss Edwards, that you have an attachment to the lower classes which always draws you to their sides; or rather, is it not a most extraordinary thing that all I say and do will not wean you from propensities which your original station in life has unhappily rendered habitual to you, you extremely vulgar-minded girl?"

"I really intended no harm, ma'am," said a sweet voice. "It was a momentary impulse, indeed."

"An impulse!" repeated Miss Monflathers scornfully. "I wonder that you presume to speak of impulses to me"—both the teachers assented—"I am astonished"—both the teach-

ers were astonished—"I suppose it is an impulse which induces you to take the part of every grovelling and debased person that comes in your way"—both the teachers supposed so too.

"But I would have you know, Miss Edwards," resumed the governess in a tone of increased severity, "that you cannot be permitted—if it be only for the sake of preserving a proper example and decorum in this establishment—that you cannot be permitted, and that you shall not be permitted, to fly in the face of your superiors in this exceedingly gross manner. If *you* have no reason to feel a becoming pride before wax-work children, there are young ladies here who have, and you must either defer to those young ladies or leave the establishment, Miss Edwards."

This young lady, being motherless and poor, was apprenticed at the school—taught for nothing—teaching others what she learnt, for nothing—boarded for nothing—lodged for nothing—and set down and rated as something immeasurably less than nothing by all the dwellers in the house. The servant-maids felt her inferiority, for they were better treated, free to come and go, and regarded in their stations with much more respect. The teachers were infinitely superior, for they had paid to go to school in their time, and were paid now. The pupils cared little for a companion who had no grand stories to tell about home; no friends to come with post-horses, and be received in all humility, with cake and wine, by the governess; no deferential servant to attend and bear her home for the holidays; nothing genteel to talk about, and nothing to display. But why was Miss Monflathers always vexed and irritated with the poor apprentice? How did that come to pass?

Why, the gayest feather in Miss Monflathers's cap, and the brightest glory of Miss Monflathers's school, was a baronet's daughter—the real live daughter of a real live baronet—who, by some extraordinary reversal of the Laws of Nature, was not only plain in features, but dull in intellect, while the poor apprentice had both a ready wit, and a handsome face and figure. It seems incredible. Here was Miss Edwards, who only paid a small premium which had been spent long ago, every day outshining and excelling the baronet's daughter, who learned all the extras (or was taught them all), and whose half-yearly bill came to double that of any other young lady's in the school, making no account of the honour and reputation of her pupilage. Therefore, and because she was a dependant, Miss Monflathers had a great dislike to Miss Edwards, and was spiteful to her, and aggravated by her, and, when

she had compassion on little Nell, verbally fell upon and maltreated her as we have already seen.

"You will not take the air to-day, Miss Edwards," said Miss Monfathers. "Have the goodness to retire to your own room, and not to leave it without permission."

The poor girl was moving hastily away, when she was suddenly, in nautical phrase, "brought to" by a subdued shriek from Miss Monfathers.

"She has passed me without any salute!" cried the governess, raising her eyes to the sky. "She has actually passed me without the slightest acknowledgment of my presence!"

The young lady turned and curtsied. Nell could see that she raised her dark eyes to the face of her superior, and that their expression, and that of her whole attitude for the instant, was one of mute but most touching appeal against this ungenerous usage. Miss Monfathers only tossed her head in reply, and the great gate closed upon a bursting heart.

"As for you, you wicked child," said Miss Monfathers, turning to Nell, "tell your mistress that if she presumes to take the liberty of sending to me any more, I will write to the legislative authorities, and have her put in the stocks, or compelled to do penance in a white sheet; and you may depend upon it that you shall certainly experience the treadmill if you dare to come here again. Now, ladies, on."

The procession filed off, two and two, with the books and parasols, and Miss Monfathers, calling the baronet's daughter to walk with her and smooth her ruffled feelings, discarded the two teachers—who by this time had exchanged their smiles for looks of sympathy—and left them to bring up the rear, and hate each other a little more for being obliged to walk together.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

**M**RS. JARLEY'S wrath, on first learning that she had been threatened with the indignity of Stocks and Penance, passed all description. The genuine and only Jarley exposed to public scorn, jeered by children, and flouted by beadles! The delight of the Nobility and Gentry shorn of a bonnet which a Lady Mayoress might have sighed to wear, and arrayed in a white sheet as a spectacle of mortification and humility! And Miss Monfathers, the audacious creature, who presumed,

even in the dimmest and remotest distance of her imagination, to conjure up the degrading picture, "I am a most inclined," said Mrs. Jarley, bursting with the fulness of her anger and the weakness of her means of revenge, "to turn atheist when I think of it!"

But, instead of adopting this course of retaliation, Mrs. Jarley, on second thoughts, brought out the suspicious bottle, and ordering glasses to be set forth upon her favourite drum, and sinking into a chair behind it, called her satellites about her, and to them several times recounted, word for word, the affronts she had received. This done, she begged them in a kind of deep despair to drink; then laughed, then cried, then took a little sip herself, then laughed and cried again, and took a little more; and so, by degrees, the worthy lady went on, increasing in smiles and decreasing in tears, until at last she could not laugh enough at Miss Monfathers, who, from being an object of dire vexation, became one of sheer ridicule and absurdity.

"For which of us is best off, I wonder," quoth Mrs. Jarley, "she or me? It's only talking, when all is said and done, and if she talks of me in the stocks, why I can talk of her in the stocks, which is a good deal funnier if we come to that. Lord, what *does* it matter, after all?"

Having arrived at this comfortable frame of mind (to which she had been greatly assisted by certain short interjectional remarks of the philosophic George), Mrs. Jarley consoled Nell with many kind words, and requested as a personal favour that, whenever she thought of Miss Monfathers, she would do nothing else but laugh at her all the days of her life.

So ended Mrs. Jarley's wrath, which subsided long before the going down of the sun. Nell's anxieties, however, were of a deeper kind, and the checks they imposed upon her cheerfulness were not so easily removed.

That evening, as she had dreaded, her grandfather stole away, and did not come back until the night was far spent. Worn out as she was, and fatigued in mind and body, she sat up alone, counting the minutes, until he returned—penniless, broken-spirited, and wretched, but still hotly bent upon his infatuation.

"Get me money," he said wildly as they parted for the night. "I must have money, Nell. It shall be paid thee back with gallant interest one day, but all the money that comes into thy hands must be mine—not for myself, but to use for thee. Remember, Nell, to use for thee!"

What could the child do, with the knowledge she had, but give him every penny that came into her hands, lest he should be tempted on to



rob their benefactress? If she told the truth (so thought the child), he would be treated as a madman; if she did not supply him with money, he would supply himself; supplying him, she fed the fire that burnt him up, and put him perhaps beyond recovery. Distracted by these thoughts, borne down by the weight of the sorrow which she dared not tell, tortured by a crowd of apprehensions whenever the old man was absent, and dreading alike his stay and his return, the colour forsook her cheek, her eye grew dim, and her heart was oppressed and heavy. All her old sorrows had come back upon her, augmented by new fears and doubts; by day they were ever present to her mind; by night they hovered round her pillow, and haunted her in dreams.

It was natural that, in the midst of her affliction, she should often revert to that sweet young lady of whom she had only caught a hasty glance, but whose sympathy, expressed in one slight brief action, dwelt in her memory like the kindnesses of years. She would often think, if she had such a friend as that to whom to tell her griefs, how much lighter her heart would be—that if she were but free to hear that voice, she would be happier. Then she would wish that she were something better, that she were not quite so poor and humble, that she dared address her without fearing a repulse; and then feel that there was an immeasurable distance between them, and have no hope that the young lady thought of her any more.

It was now holiday-time at the schools, and the young ladies had gone home, and Miss Monflathers was reported to be flourishing in London, and damaging the hearts of middle-aged gentlemen, but nobody said anything about Miss Edwards, whether she had gone home, or whether she had any home to go to, whether she was still at the school, or anything about her. But one evening, as Nell was returning from a lonely walk, she happened to pass the inn where the stage-coaches stopped, just as one drove up, and there was the beautiful girl she so well remembered, pressing forward to embrace a young child whom they were helping down from the roof.

Well, this was her sister, her little sister, much younger than Nell, whom she had not seen (so the story went afterwards) for five years, and to bring whom to that place on a short visit, she had been saving her poor means all that time. Nell felt as if her heart would break when she saw them meet. They went a little apart from the knot of people who had congregated about the coach, and fell upon each other's neck, and sobbed, and wept with joy. Their plain and

simple dress, the distance which the child had come alone, their agitation and delight, and the tears they shed, would have told their history by themselves.

They became a little more composed in a short time, and went away, not so much hand-in-hand as clinging to each other. "Are you sure you're happy, sister?" said the child as they passed where Nell was standing. "Quite happy now," she answered. "But always?" said the child. "Ah, sister, why do you turn away your face?"

Nell could not help following at a little distance. They went to the house of an old nurse, where the elder sister had engaged a bedroom for the child. "I shall come to you early every morning," she said, "and we can be together all the day."—"Why not at night-time too? Dear sister, would they be angry with you for *that*?"

Why were the eyes of little Nell wet, that night, with tears like those of the two sisters? Why did she bear a grateful heart because they had met, and feel it pain to think that they would shortly part? Let us not believe that any selfish reference—unconscious though it might have been—to her own trials awoke this sympathy, but thank God that the innocent joys of others can strongly move us, and that we, even in our fallen nature, have one source of pure emotion which must be prized in Heaven!

By morning's cheerful glow, but oftener still by evening's gentle light, the child, with a respect for the short and happy intercourse of these two sisters which forbade her to approach and say a thankful word, although she yearned to do so, followed them at a distance in their walks and rambles, stopping when they stopped, sitting on the grass when they sat down, rising when they went on, and feeling it a companionship and delight to be so near them. Their evening walk was by a river's side. Here, every night, the child was too, unseen by them, unthought of, unregarded; but feeling as if they were her friends, as if they had confidences and trusts together, as if her load were lightened and less hard to bear; as if they mingled their sorrows, and found mutual consolation. It was a weak fancy perhaps, the childish fancy of a young and lonely creature; but, night after night, and still the sisters loitered in the same place, and still the child followed with a mild and softened heart.

She was much startled, on returning home one night, to find that Mrs. Jarley had commanded an announcement to be prepared, to the effect that the stupendous collection would only remain in its present quarters one day longer; in fulfil-

ment of which threat (for all announcements connected with public amusements are well known to be irrevocable and most exact), the stupendous collection shut up next day.

"Are we going from this place directly, ma'am?" said Nell.

"Look here, child," returned Mrs. Jarley. "That'll inform you." And so saying, Mrs. Jarley produced another announcement, wherein it was stated that, in consequence of numerous inquiries at the wax-work door, and in consequence of crowds having been disappointed in obtaining admission, the Exhibition would be continued for one week longer, and would reopen next day.

"For now that the schools are gone, and the regular sight-seers exhausted," said Mrs. Jarley, "we come to the General Public, and they want stimulating."

Upon the following day, at noon, Mrs. Jarley established herself behind the highly-ornamented table, attended by the distinguished effigies before mentioned, and ordered the doors to be thrown open for the readmission of a discerning and enlightened public. But the first day's operations were by no means of a successful character, inasmuch as the general public, though they manifested a lively interest in Mrs. Jarley personally, and such of her waxen satellites as were to be seen for nothing, were not affected by any impulses moving them to the payment of sixpence a head. Thus, notwithstanding that a great many people continued to stare at the entry and the figures therein displayed; and remained there with great perseverance, by the hour at a time, to hear the barrel-organ played and to read the bills; and notwithstanding that they were kind enough to recommend their friends to patronise the exhibition in the like manner, until the doorway was regularly blockaded by half the population of the town, who, when they went off duty, were relieved by the other half; it was not found that the treasury was any the richer, or that the prospects of the establishment were at all encouraging.

In this depressed state of the classical market, Mrs. Jarley made extraordinary efforts to stimulate the popular taste, and whet the popular curiosity. Certain machinery in the body of the nun on the leads over the door was cleaned up and put in motion, so that the figure shook its head paralytically all day long, to the great admiration of a drunken, but very Protestant, barber over the way, who looked upon the said paralytic motion as typical of the degrading effect wrought upon the human mind by the ceremonies of the Romish Church, and dis-

coursed upon that theme with great eloquence and morality. The two carters constantly passed in and out of the exhibition-room, under various disguises, protesting aloud that the sight was better worth the money than anything they had beheld in all their lives, and urging the bystanders, with tears in their eyes, not to neglect such a brilliant gratification. Mrs. Jarley sat in the pay-place, chinking silver moneys from noon till night, and solemnly calling upon the crowd to take notice that the price of admission was only sixpence, and that the departure of the whole collection, on a short tour among the Crowned Heads of Europe, was positively fixed for that day week.

"So be in time, be in time, be in time," said Mrs. Jarley at the close of every such address. "Remember that this is Jarley's stupendous collection of upwards of one Hundred Figures, and that it is the only collection in the world; all others being impostors and deceptions. Be in time, be in time, be in time!"

#### CHAPTER XXXIII.

**A**S the course of this tale requires that we should become acquainted, somewhere hereabouts, with a few particulars connected with the domestic economy of Mr. Sampson Brass, and as a more convenient place than the present is not likely to occur for that purpose, the historian takes the friendly reader by the hand, and springing with him into the air, and cleaving the same at a greater rate than ever Don Cleophas Leandro Perez Zambullo and his familiar travelled through that pleasant region in company, alights with him upon the pavement of Bevis Marks.

The intrepid aeronauts alight before a small dark house, once the residence of Mr. Sampson Brass.

In the parlour window of this little habitation, which is so close upon the footway that the passenger who takes the wall brushes the dim glass with his coat-sleeve—much to its improvement, for it is very dirty—in this parlour window, in the days of its occupation by Sampson Brass, there hung, all awry and slack, and discoloured by the sun, a curtain of faded green, so threadbare from long service as by no means to intercept the view of the little dark room, but rather to afford a favourable medium through which to observe it accurately. There was not much to look at. A rickety table, with spare bundles of



papers, yellow and ragged from long carriage in the pocket, ostentatiously displayed upon its top; a couple of stools set face to face on opposite sides of this crazy piece of furniture; a treacherous old chair by the fire-place, whose withered arms had hugged full many a client and helped to squeeze him dry; a second-hand wig-box, used as a depository for blank writs and declarations and other small forms of law, once the sole contents of the head which belonged to the wig which belonged to the box, as they were now of the box itself; two or three common books of practice; a jar of ink, a pounce box, a stunted hearth-broom, a carpet trodden to shreds, but still clinging with the tightness of desperation to its tacks—these, with the yellow wainscot of the walls, the smoke-discoloured ceiling, the dust and cobwebs, were among the most prominent decorations of the office of Mr. Sampson Brass.

But this was mere still-life, of no greater importance than the plate, "BRASS, Solicitor," upon the door, and the bill, "First floor to let to a single gentleman," which was tied to the knocker. The office commonly held two examples of animated nature, more to the purpose of this history, and in whom it has a stronger interest and more particular concern.

Of these, one was Mr. Brass himself, who has already appeared in these pages. The other was his clerk, assistant, housekeeper, secretary, confidential plotter, adviser, intriguer, and bill-of-cost increaser, Miss Brass—a kind of Amazon at common law, of whom it may be desirable to offer a brief description.

Miss Sally Brass, then, was a lady of thirty-five or thereabouts, of a gaunt and bony figure, and a resolute bearing, which, if it repressed the softer emotions of love, and kept admirers at a distance, certainly inspired a feeling akin to awe in the breasts of those male strangers who had the happiness to approach her. In face she bore a striking resemblance to her brother Sampson—so exact, indeed, was the likeness between them, that had it consorted with Miss Brass's maiden modesty and gentle womanhood to have assumed her brother's clothes in a frolic, and sat down beside him, it would have been difficult for the oldest friend of the family to determine which was Sampson and which Sally, especially as the lady carried upon her upper lip certain reddish demonstrations, which, if the imagination had been assisted by her attire, might have been mistaken for a beard. These were, however, in all probability, nothing more than eye-lashes in a wrong place, as the eyes of Miss Brass were quite free from any such natural imper-

nences. In complexion Miss Brass was sallow—rather a dirty sallow, so to speak—but this hue was agreeably relieved by the healthy glow which mantled in the extreme tip of her laughing nose. Her voice was exceedingly impressive—deep and rich in quality, and, once heard, not easily forgotten. Her usual dress was a green gown, in colour not unlike the curtain of the office window, made tight to the figure, and terminating at the throat, where it was fastened behind by a peculiarly large and massive button. Feeling, no doubt, that simplicity and plainness are the soul of elegance, Miss Brass wore no collar or kerchief except upon her head, which was invariably ornamented with a brown gauze scarf, like the wing of the fabled vampire, and which, twisted into any form that happened to suggest itself, formed an easy and graceful head-dress.

Such was Miss Brass in person. In mind, she was of a strong and vigorous turn, having from her earliest youth devoted herself with uncommon ardour to the study of the law; not wasting her speculations upon its eagle flights, which are rare, but tracing it attentively through all the slippery and eel-like crawlings in which it commonly pursues its way. Nor had she, like many persons of great intellect, confined herself to theory, or stopped short where practical usefulness begins; inasmuch as she could engross, fair-copy, fill up printed forms with perfect accuracy, and, in short, transact any ordinary duty of the office down to pouncing a skin of parchment or mending a pen. It is difficult to understand how, possessed of these combined attractions, she should remain Miss Brass; but whether she had steeled her heart against mankind, or whether those who might have wooed and won her were deterred by fears that, being learned in the law, she might have too near her fingers' ends those particular statutes which regulate what are familiarly termed actions for breach, certain it is that she was still in a state of celibacy, and still in daily occupation of her old stool opposite to that of her brother Sampson. And equally certain it is, by the way, that between these two stools a great many people had come to the ground.

One morning Mr. Sampson Brass sat upon his stool copying some legal process, and viciously digging his pen deep into the paper, as if he were writing upon the very heart of the party against whom it was directed; and Miss Sally Brass sat upon her stool making a new pen preparatory to drawing out a little bill, which was her favourite occupation; and so they sat in silence for a long time, until Miss Brass broke silence.

"Have you nearly done, Sammy?" said Miss Brass; for in her mild and feminine lips Sampson became Sammy, and all things were softened down.

"No," returned her brother. "It would have been all done, though, if you had helped at the right time."

"Oh yes, indeed," cried Miss Sally; "you want my help, don't you?—*you*, too, that are going to keep a clerk!"

"Am I going to keep a clerk for my own pleasure, or because of my own wish, you provoking rascal?" said Mr. Brass, putting his pen in his mouth, and grinning spitefully at his sister. "What do you taunt me about going to keep a clerk for?"

It may be observed in this place, lest the fact of Mr. Brass calling a lady a rascal should occasion any wonderment or surprise, that he was so habituated to having her near him in a man's capacity, that he had gradually accustomed himself to talk to her as though she were really a man. And this feeling was so perfectly reciprocal, that not only did Mr. Brass often call Miss Brass a rascal, or even put an adjective before the rascal, but Miss Brass looked upon it as quite a matter of course, and was as little moved as any other lady would be by being called an angel.

"What do you taunt me, after three hours' talk last night, with going to keep a clerk for?" repeated Mr. Brass, grinning again with the pen in his mouth, like some nobleman's or gentleman's crest. "Is it my fault?"

"All I know is," said Miss Sally, smiling drily, for she delighted in nothing so much as irritating her brother, "that if every one of your clients is to force us to keep a clerk, whether we want to or not, you had better leave off business, strike yourself off the roll, and get taken in execution as soon as you can."

"Have we got any other client like him?" said Brass. "Have we got another client like him, now—will you answer me that?"

"Do you mean in the face?" said his sister.

"Do I mean in the face?" sneered Sampson Brass, reaching over to take up the bill book, and fluttering its leaves rapidly. "Look here—Daniel Quilp, Esquire—Daniel Quilp, Esquire—Daniel Quilp, Esquire—all through. Whether should I take a clerk that he recommends, and says, 'This is the man for you,' or lose all this—eh?"

Miss Sally deigned to make no reply, but smiled again, and went on with her work.

"But I know what it is," resumed Brass after a short silence. "You're afraid you won't have

as long a finger in the business as you've been used to have. Do you think I don't see through that?"

"The business wouldn't go on very long. I expect, without me," returned his sister composedly. "Don't you be a fool and provoke me, Sammy, but mind what you're doing, and do it."

Sampson Brass, who was at heart in great fear of his sister, sulkily bent over his writing again, and listened as she said:

"If I determined that the clerk ought not to come, of course he wouldn't be allowed to come. You know that well enough, so don't talk nonsense."

Mr. Brass received this observation with increased meekness, merely remarking, under his breath, that he didn't like that kind of joking, and that Miss Sally would be "a much better fellow" if she forbore to aggravate him. To this compliment Miss Sally replied that she had a relish for the amusement, and had no intention to forego its gratification. Mr. Brass not caring, as it seemed, to pursue the subject any further, they both plied their pens at a great pace, and there the discussion ended.

While they were thus employed, the window was suddenly darkened, as by some person standing close against it. As Mr. Brass and Miss Sally looked up to ascertain the cause, the top sash was nimbly lowered from without, and Quilp thrust in his head.

"Hallo!" he said, standing on tiptoe on the window-sill, and looking down into the room. "Is there anybody at home? Is there any of the devil's ware here? Is Brass at a premium, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed the lawyer in an affected ecstasy. "Oh, very good, sir! Oh, very good indeed! Quite eccentric! Dear me, what humour he has!"

"Is that my Sally?" croaked the dwarf, ogling the fair Miss Brass. "Is it Justice with the bandage off her eyes, and without the sword and scales? Is it the Strong Arm of the Law? Is it the Virgin of Bevis?"

"What an amazing flow of spirits!" cried Brass. "Upon my word, it's quite extraordinary!"

"Open the door," said Quilp. "I've got him here. Such a clerk for you, Brass, such a prize, such an ace of trumps. Be quick and open the door, or, if there's another lawyer near and he should happen to look out of window, he'll snap him up before your eyes, he will."

It is probable that the loss of the phoenix of clerks, even to a rival practitioner, would not



have broken Mr. Brass's heart ; but, pretending great alacrity, he rose from his seat, and going to the door, returned, introducing his client, who led by the hand no less a person than Mr. Richard Swiveller.

"There she is," said Quilp, stopping short at the door, and wrinkling up his eyebrows as he looked towards Miss Sally ; "there is the woman I ought to have married—there is the beautiful Sarah—there is the female who has all the charms of her sex, and none of their weaknesses. Oh, Sally, Sally !"

To this amorous address Miss Brass briefly responded "Bother !"

"Hard-hearted as the metal from which she takes her name," said Quilp. "Why don't she change it—melt down the brass, and take another name?"

"Hold your nonsense, Mr. Quilp, do," returned Miss Sally with a grim smile. "I wonder you're not ashamed of yourself before a strange young man."

"The strange young man," said Quilp, handing Dick Swiveller forward, "is too susceptible himself, not to understand me well. This is Mr. Swiveller, my intimate friend—a gentleman of good family and great expectations, but who, having rather involved himself by youthful indiscretion, is content for a time to fill the humble station of a clerk—humble, but here most enviable. What a delicious atmosphere !"

If Mr. Quilp spoke figuratively, and meant to imply that the air breathed by Miss Sally Brass was sweetened and rarefied by that dainty creature, he had doubtless good reason for what he said. But if he spoke of the delights of the atmosphere of Mr. Brass's office in a literal sense, he had certainly a peculiar taste, as it was of a close and earthy kind, and, besides being frequently impregnated with strong whiffs of the second-hand wearing apparel exposed for sale in Duke's Place and Houndsditch, had a decided flavour of rats and mice, and a taint of mouldiness. Perhaps some doubts of its pure delight presented themselves to Mr. Swiveller, as he gave vent to one or two short abrupt sniffs, and looked incredulously at the grinning dwarf.

"Mr. Swiveller," said Quilp, "being pretty well accustomed to the agricultural pursuits of sowing wild oats, Miss Sally, prudently considers that half a loaf is better than no bread. To be out of harm's way he prudently thinks is something too, and therefore he accepts your brother's offer. Brass, Mr. Swiveller is yours."

"I am very glad, sir," said Mr. Brass, "very glad indeed. Mr. Swiveller, sir, is fortunate to

have your friendship. You may be very proud, sir, to have the friendship of Mr. Quilp."

Dick murmured something about never wanting a friend or a bottle to give him, and also gasped forth his favourite allusion to the wing of friendship and its never moulting a feather ; but his faculties appeared to be absorbed in the contemplation of Miss Sally Brass, at whom he stared with blank and rueful looks, which delighted the watchful dwarf beyond measure. As to the divine Miss Sally herself, she rubbed her hands as men of business do, and took a few turns up and down the office with her pen behind her ear.

"I suppose," said the dwarf, turning briskly to his legal friend, "that Mr. Swiveller enters upon his duties at once? It's Monday morning."

"At once, if you please, sir, by all means," returned Brass.

"Miss Sally will teach him law, the delightful study of the law," said Quilp ; "she'll be his guide, his friend, his companion, his Blackstone, his Coke upon Littleton, his Young Lawyer's Best Companion."

"He is exceedingly eloquent," said Brass, like a man abstracted, and looking at the roofs of the opposite houses, with his hands in his pockets : "he has an extraordinary flow of language. Beautiful, really."

"With Miss Sally," Quilp went on, "and the beautiful fictions of the law, his days will pass like minutes. Those charming creations of the poet, John Doe and Richard Roe, when they first dawn upon him, will open a new world for the enlargement of his mind and the improvement of his heart."

"Oh, beautiful, beautiful! Beau-ti-ful indeed!" cried Brass. "It's a treat to hear him !"

"Where will Mr. Swiveller sit?" said Quilp, looking round.

"Why, we'll buy another stool, sir," returned Brass. "We hadn't any thoughts of having a gentleman with us, sir, until you were kind enough to suggest it, and our accommodation's not extensive. We'll look about for a second-hand stool, sir. In the meantime, if Mr. Swiveller will take my seat, and try his hand at a fair copy of this ejection, as I shall be out pretty well all the morning——"

"Walk with me," said Quilp. "I have a word or two to say to you on points of business. Can you spare the time?"

"Can I spare the time to walk with *you*, sir? You're joking, sir, you're joking with me," replied the lawyer, putting on his hat. "I'm ready, sir, quite ready. My time must be fully occupied indeed, sir, not to leave me time to

walk with you. It's not everybody, sir, who has an opportunity of improving himself by the conversation of Mr. Quilp."

The dwarf glanced sarcastically at his brazen friend, and, with a short dry cough, turned upon his heel to bid adieu to Miss Sally. After a very gallant parting on his side, and a very cool and gentlemanly sort of one on hers, he nodded to Dick Swiveller, and withdrew with the attorney.

Dick stood at the desk in a state of utter stupefaction, staring with all his might at the beauteous Sally, as if she had been some curious animal whose like had never lived. When the dwarf got into the street, he mounted again upon the window-sill, and looked into the office for a moment with a grinning face, as a man might peep into a cage. Dick glanced upward at him, but without any token of recognition; and long after he had disappeared, still stood gazing upon Miss Sally Brass, seeing or thinking of nothing else, and rooted to the spot.

Miss Brass, being by this time deep in the bill of costs, took no notice whatever of Dick, but went scratching on, with a noisy pen, scoring down the figures with evident delight, and working like a steam-engine. There stood Dick, gazing now at the green gown, now at the brown head-dress, now at the face, and now at the rapid pen, in a state of stupid perplexity, wondering how he got into the company of that strange monster, and whether it was a dream and he would ever wake. At last he heaved a deep sigh, and began slowly pulling off his coat.

Mr. Swiveller pulled off his coat, and folded it up with great elaboration, staring at Miss Sally all the time; then put on a blue jacket with a double row of gilt buttons, which he had originally ordered for aquatic expeditions, but had brought with him that morning for office purposes; and still keeping his eye upon her, suffered himself to drop down silently upon Mr. Brass's stool. Then he underwent a relapse, and becoming powerless again, rested his chin upon his hand, and opened his eyes so wide, that it appeared quite out of the question that he could ever close them any more.

When he had looked so long that he could see nothing, Dick took his eyes off the fair object of his amazement, turned over the leaves of the draft he was to copy, dipped his pen into the inkstand, and at last, and by slow approaches, began to write. But he had not written half-a-dozen words when, reaching over to the inkstand to take a fresh dip, he happened to raise his eyes. There was the intolerable brown head-dress—there was the green gown—

there, in short, was Miss Sally Brass, arrayed in all her charms, and more tremendous than ever.

This happened so often, that Mr. Swiveller by degrees began to feel strange influences creeping over him—horrible desires to annihilate this Sally Brass—mysterious promptings to knock her head-dress off, and try how she looked without it. There was a very large ruler on the table—a large, black, shining ruler. Mr. Swiveller took it up and began to rub his nose with it.

From rubbing his nose with the ruler, to poisoning it in his hand and giving it an occasional flourish after the tomahawk manner, the transition was easy and natural. In some of these flourishes it went close to Miss Sally's head; the ragged edges of the head-dress fluttered with the wind it raised; advance it but an inch, and that great brown knot was on the ground: yet still the unconscious maiden worked away, and never raised her eyes.

Well, this was a great relief. It was a good thing to write doggedly and obstinately until he was desperate, and then snatch up the ruler and whirl it about the brown head-dress with the consciousness that he could have it off if he liked. It was a good thing to draw it back, and rub his nose very hard with it, if he thought Miss Sally was going to look up, and to recompense himself with more hardy flourishes when he found she was still absorbed. By these means Mr. Swiveller calmed the agitation of his feelings, until his applications to the ruler became less fierce and frequent, and he could even write as many as half-a-dozen consecutive lines without having recourse to it—which was a great victory.

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

**I**N course of time, that is to say, after a couple of hours or so of diligent application, Miss Brass arrived at the conclusion of her task, and recorded the fact by wiping her pen upon the green gown, and taking a pinch of snuff from a little round tin box which she carried in her pocket. Having disposed of this temperate refreshment, she arose from her stool, tied her papers into a formal packet with red tape, and taking them under her arm, marched out of the office.

Mr. Swiveller had scarcely sprung off his seat and commenced the performance of a maniac



hornpipe, when he was interrupted in the fulness of his joy at being again alone, by the opening of the door, and the reappearance of Miss Sally's head.

"I am going out," said Miss Brass.

"Very good, ma'am," returned Dick. "And don't hurry yourself on my account to come back, ma'am," he added inwardly.

"If anybody comes on office business, take their messages, and say that the gentleman who attends to that matter isn't in at present, will you?" said Miss Brass.

"I will, ma'am," replied Dick.

"I shan't be very long," said Miss Brass, retiring.

"I'm sorry to hear it, ma'am," rejoined Dick when she had shut the door. "I hope you may be unexpectedly detained, ma'am. If you could manage to be run over, ma'am, but not seriously, so much the better."

Uttering these expressions of good-will with extreme gravity, Mr. Swiveller sat down in the client's chair and pondered; then took a few turns up and down the room, and fell into the chair again.

"So I'm Brass's clerk, am I?" said Dick.



"IN SOME OF THESE FLOURISHES IT WENT CLOSE TO MISS SALLY'S HEAD."

"Brass's clerk, eh? And the clerk of Brass's sister—clerk to a female Dragon. Very good, very good! What shall I be next? Shall I be a convict in a felt hat and a grey suit, trotting about a dockyard with my number neatly embroidered on my uniform, and the order of the garter on my leg, restrained from chafing my ankle by a twisted Belcher handkerchief? Shall I be that? Will that do, or is it too genteel? Whatever you please, have it your own way of course."

As he was entirely alone, it may be presumed  
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that, in these remarks, Mr. Swiveller addressed himself to his fate or destiny, whom, as we learn by the precedents, it is the custom of heroes to taunt in a very bitter and ironical manner when they find themselves in situations of an unpleasant nature. This is the more probable from the circumstance of Mr. Swiveller directing his observations to the ceiling, which these bodiless personages are usually supposed to inhabit—except in theatrical cases, when they live in the heart of the great chandelier.

"Quilp offers me this place, which he says he

can insure me," resumed Dick after a thoughtful silence, and telling off the circumstances of his position, one by one, upon his fingers; "Fred, who, I could have taken my affidavit, would not have heard of such a thing, backs Quilp to my astonishment, and urges me to take it also—staggerer number one! My aunt in the country stops the supplies, and writes an affectionate note to say that she has made a new will, and left me out of it—staggerer number two! No money; no credit; no support from Fred, who seems to turn steady all at once; notice to quit the old lodgings—staggerers three, four, five, and six! Under an accumulation of staggerers, no man can be considered a free agent. No man knocks himself down; if his destiny knocks him down, his destiny must pick him up again. Then I'm very glad that mine has brought all this upon itself, and I shall be as careless as I can, and make myself quite at home to spite it. So go on, my buck," said Mr. Swiveller, taking his leave of the ceiling with a significant nod, "and let us see which of us will be tired first!"

Dismissing the subject of his downfall with these reflections, which were no doubt very profound, and are indeed not altogether unknown in certain systems of moral philosophy. Mr. Swiveller shook off his despondency and assumed the cheerful ease of an irresponsible clerk.

As a means towards his composure and self-possession, he entered into a more minute examination of the office than he had yet had time to make; looked into the wig-box, the books, and ink-bottle; untied and inspected all the papers; carved a few devices on the table with the sharp blade of Mr. Brass's penknife; and wrote his name on the inside of the wooden coal-scuttle. Having, as it were, taken formal possession of his clerkship in virtue of these proceedings, he opened the window and leaned negligently out of it until a beer-boy happened to pass, whom he commanded to set down his tray and to serve him with a pint of mild porter, which he drank upon the spot and promptly paid for, with the view of breaking ground for a system of future credit, and opening a correspondence tending thereto, without loss of time. Then, three or four little boys dropped in, on legal errands from three or four attorneys of the Brass grade: whom Mr. Swiveller received and dismissed with about as professional a manner, and as correct and comprehensive an understanding of their business, as would have been shown by a clown in a pantomime under similar circumstances. These things done and over, he got upon his stool again, and tried his hand

at drawing caricatures of Miss Brass with a pen and ink, whistling very cheerfully all the time.

He was occupied in this diversion when a coach stopped near the door, and presently afterwards there was a loud double knock. As this was no business of Mr. Swiveller's, the person not ringing the office bell, he pursued his diversion with perfect composure, notwithstanding that he rather thought there was nobody else in the house.

In this, however, he was mistaken; for, after the knock had been repeated with increased impatience, the door was opened, and somebody with a very heavy tread went up the stairs and into the room above. Mr. Swiveller was wondering whether this might be another Miss Brass, twin sister to the Dragon, when there came a rapping of knuckles at the office door.

"Come in!" said Dick. "Don't stand upon ceremony. The business will get rather complicated if I've many more customers. Come in!"

"Oh, please," said a little voice very low down in the doorway, "will you come and show the lodgings?"

Dick leant over the table, and descried a small slipshod girl in a dirty coarse apron and bib, which left nothing of her visible but her face and feet. She might as well have been dressed in a violin case.

"Why, who are you?" said Dick.

To which the only reply was, "Oh, please will you come and show the lodgings?"

There never was such an old-fashioned child in her looks and manner. She must have been at work from her cradle. She seemed as much afraid of Dick as Dick was amazed at her.

"I haven't got anything to do with the lodgings," said Dick. "Tell 'em to call again."

"Oh, but please will you come and show the lodgings?" returned the girl. "It's eighteen shillings a week, and us finding plate and linen. Boots and clothes is extra, and fires in winter-time is eightpence a day."

"Why don't you show 'em yourself? You seem to know all about 'em," said Dick.

"Miss Sally said I wasn't to, because people wouldn't believe the attendance was good if they saw how small I was first."

"Well, but they'll see how small you are afterwards, won't they?" said Dick.

"Ah! But then they'll have taken 'em for a fortnight certain," replied the child with a shrewd look; "and people don't like moving when they're once settled."

"This is a queer sort of thing," muttered



Dick, rising. "What do you mean to say you are—the cook?"

"Yes, I do plain cooking," replied the child. "I'm housemaid too; I do all the work of the house."

"I suppose Brass and the Dragon and I do the dirtiest part of it," thought Dick. And he might have thought much more, being in a doubtful and hesitating mood, but that the girl again urged her request, and certain mysterious bumping sounds on the passage and staircase seemed to give note of the applicant's impatience. Richard Swiveller, therefore, sticking a pen behind each ear, and carrying another in his mouth as a token of his great importance and devotion to business, hurried out to meet and treat with the single gentleman.

He was a little surprised to perceive that the bumping sounds were occasioned by the progress up-stairs of the single gentleman's trunk, which, being nearly twice as wide as the staircase, and exceedingly heavy withal, it was no easy matter for the united exertions of the single gentleman and the coachman to convey up the steep ascent. But there they were, crushing each other, and pushing and pulling with all their might, and getting the trunk tight and fast in all kinds of impossible angles, and to pass them was out of the question; for which sufficient reason, Mr. Swiveller followed slowly behind, entering a new protest on every stair against the house of Mr. Sampson Brass being thus taken by storm.

To these remonstrances the single gentleman answered not a word, but, when the trunk was at last got into the bedroom, sat down upon it, and wiped his bald head and face with his handkerchief. He was very warm, and well he might be; for, not to mention the exertion of getting the trunk up-stairs, he was closely muffled in winter garments, though the thermometer had stood all day at eighty-one in the shade.

"I believe, sir," said Richard Swiveller, taking his pen out of his mouth, "that you desire to look at these apartments. They are very charming apartments, sir. They command an uninterrupted view of—of over the way, and they are within one minute's walk of—of the corner of the street. There is exceedingly mild porter, sir, in the immediate vicinity, and the contingent advantages are extraordinary."

"What's the rent?" said the single gentleman.

"One pound per week," replied Dick, improving on the terms.

"I'll take 'em."

"The boots and clothes are extras," said Dick; "and the fires in the winter-time are——"

"All agreed to," answered the single gentleman.

"Two weeks certain," said Dick, "are the——"

"Two weeks!" cried the single gentleman gruffly, eyeing him from top to toe. "Two years. I shall live here for two years. Here. Ten pound down. The bargain's made."

"Why, you see," said Dick, "my name's not Brass, and——"

"Who said it was? *My* name's not Brass. What then?"

"The name of the master of the house is," said Dick.

"I'm glad of it," returned the single gentleman; "it's a good name for a lawyer. Coachman, you may go. So may you, sir."

Mr. Swiveller was so much confounded by the single gentleman riding rough-shod over him at this rate, that he stood looking at him almost as hard as he had looked at Miss Sally. The single gentleman, however, was not in the slightest degree affected by this circumstance, but proceeded with perfect composure to unwind the shawl which was tied round his neck, and then to pull off his boots. Freed of these encumbrances, he went on to divest himself of his other clothing, which he folded up, piece by piece, and ranged in order on the trunk. Then, he pulled down the window blinds, drew the curtains, wound up his watch, and, quite leisurely and methodically, got into bed.

"Take down the bill," were his parting words as he looked out from between the curtains; "and let nobody call me till I ring the bell."

With that the curtains closed, and he seemed to snore immediately.

"This is a most remarkable and supernatural sort of house!" said Mr. Swiveller as he walked into the office with the bill in his hand. "She-dragons in the business, conducting themselves like professional gentlemen; plain cooks of three feet high appearing mysteriously from underground; strangers walking in and going to bed without leave or licence in the middle of the day! If he should be one of the miraculous fellows that turn up now and then, and has gone to sleep for two years, I shall be in a pleasant situation. It's my destiny, however, and I hope Brass may like it. I shall be sorry if he don't. But it's no business of mine—I have nothing whatever to do with it!"

## CHAPTER XXXV.

MR. BRASS, on returning home, received the report of his clerk with much complacency and satisfaction, and was particular in inquiring after the ten-pound note, which, proving on examination to be a good and lawful note of the Governor and Company of the Bank of England, increased his good-humour considerably. Indeed, he so over-

flowed with liberality and condescension, that, in the fulness of his heart, he invited Mr. Swiveller to partake of a bowl of punch with him at that remote and indefinite period which is currently denominated "one of these days," and paid him many handsome compliments on the uncommon aptitude for business which his conduct on the first day of his devotion to it had so plainly evinced.

It was a maxim with Mr. Brass that the habit



"OH, PLEASE," SAID A LITTLE VOICE VERY LOW DOWN IN THE DOORWAY, "WILL YOU COME AND SHOW THE LODGINGS?"

of paying compliments kept a man's tongue oiled without any expense; and, as that useful member ought never to grow rusty or creak in turning on its hinges in the case of a practitioner of the law, in whom it should be always glib and easy, he lost few opportunities of improving himself by the utterance of handsome speeches and eulogistic expressions. And this had passed into such a habit with him, that, if he could not be correctly said to have his tongue at his fingers'

ends, he might certainly be said to have it anywhere but in his face: which being, as we have already seen, of a harsh and repulsive character, was not oiled so easily, but frowned above all the smooth speeches—one of nature's beacons, warning off those who navigated the shoals and breakers of the World, or of that dangerous strait the Law, and admonishing them to seek less treacherous harbours, and try their fortune elsewhere.



While Mr. Brass by turns overwhelmed his clerk with compliments, and inspected the ten-pound note, Miss Sally showed little emotion, and that of no pleasurable kind, for, as the tendency of her legal practice had been to fix her thoughts on small gains and gripings, and to whet and sharpen her natural wisdom, she was not a little disappointed that the single gentleman had obtained the lodgings at such an easy rate, arguing that when he was seen to have set his mind upon them, he should have been at the least charged double or treble the usual terms, and that, in exact proportion as he pressed forward, Mr. Swiveller should have hung back. But neither the good opinion of Mr. Brass, nor the dissatisfaction of Miss Sally, wrought any impression upon that young gentleman, who, throwing the responsibility of this and all other acts and deeds thereafter to be done by him upon his unlucky destiny, was quite resigned and comfortable: fully prepared for the worst, and philosophically indifferent to the best.

"Good morning, Mr. Richard," said Brass on the second day of Mr. Swiveller's clerkship. "Sally found you a second-hand stool, sir, yesterday evening, in Whitechapel. She's a rare fellow at a bargain, I can tell you, Mr. Richard. You'll find that a first-rate stool, sir, take my word for it."

"It's rather a crazy one to look at," said Dick.

"You'll find it a most amazing stool to sit down upon, you may depend," returned Mr. Brass. "It was bought in the open street just opposite the hospital, and, as it has been standing there a month or two, it has got rather dusty and a little brown from being in the sun, that's all."

"I hope it hasn't got any fevers or anything of that sort in it," said Dick, sitting himself down discontentedly, between Mr. Sampson and the chaste Sally. "One of the legs is longer than the others."

"Then we get a bit of timber in, sir," retorted Brass. "Ha, ha, ha! We get a bit of timber in, sir, and that's another advantage of my sister's going to market for us. Miss Brass, Mr. Richard, is the——"

"Will you keep quiet?" interrupted the fair subject of these remarks, looking up from her papers. "How am I to work if you keep on chattering?"

"What an uncertain chap you are!" returned the lawyer. "Sometimes you're all for a chat. At another time you're all for work. A man never knows what humour he'll find you in."

"I'm in a working humour now," said Miss

Sally, "so don't disturb me, if you please. And don't take him," Miss Sally pointed with the feather of her pen to Richard, "off his business. He won't do more than he can help, I dare say."

Mr. Brass had evidently a strong inclination to make an angry reply, but was deterred by prudent or timid considerations, as he only muttered something about aggravation and a vagabond; not associating the terms with any individual, but mentioning them as connected with some abstract ideas which happened to occur to him. They went on writing for a long time in silence after this—in such a dull silence that Mr. Swiveller (who required excitement) had several times fallen asleep, and written divers strange words in an unknown character with his eyes shut, when Miss Sally at length broke in upon the monotony of the office by pulling out the little tin box, taking a noisy pinch of snuff, and then expressing her opinion that Mr. Richard Swiveller had "done it."

"Done what, ma'am?" said Richard.

"Do you know," returned Miss Brass, "that the lodger isn't up yet—that nothing has been seen or heard of him since he went to bed yesterday afternoon?"

"Well, ma'am," said Dick, "I suppose he may sleep his ten pound out in peace and quietness, if he likes."

"Ah! I begin to think he'll never wake," observed Miss Sally.

"It's a very remarkable circumstance," said Brass, laying down his pen; "really, very remarkable. Mr. Richard, you'll remember, if this gentleman should be found to have hung himself to the bed-post, or any unpleasant accident of that kind should happen—you'll remember, Mr. Richard, that this ten-pound note was given to you in part payment of two years' rent? You'll bear that in mind, Mr. Richard; you had better make a note of it, sir, in case you should ever be called upon to give evidence."

Mr. Swiveller took a large sheet of foolscap, and, with a countenance of profound gravity, began to make a very small note in one corner.

"We can never be too cautious," said Mr. Brass. "There is a deal of wickedness going about the world, a deal of wickedness. Did the gentleman happen to say, sir—— But never mind that at present, sir; finish that little memorandum first."

Dick did so, and handed it to Mr. Brass, who had dismounted from his stool, and was walking up and down the office.

"Oh, this is the memorandum, is it?" said Brass, running his eye over the document.

"Very good. Now, Mr. Richard, did the gentleman say anything else?"

"No."

"Are you sure, Mr. Richard," said Brass solemnly, "that the gentleman said nothing else?"

"Devil a word, sir," replied Dick.

"Think again, sir," said Brass; "it's my duty, sir, in the position in which I stand, and as an honourable member of the legal profession—the first profession in this country, sir, or in any other country, or in any of the planets that shine above us at night, and are supposed to be inhabited—it's my duty, sir, as an honourable member of that profession, not to put to you a leading question in a matter of this delicacy and importance. Did the gentleman, sir, who took the first floor of you yesterday afternoon, and who brought with him a box of property—a box of property—say anything more than is set down in this memorandum?"

"Come, don't be a fool," said Miss Sally.

Dick looked at her, and then at Brass, and then at Miss Sally again, and still said "No."

"Pooh, pooh! Deuce take it, Mr. Richard, how dull you are!" cried Brass, relaxing into a smile. "Did he say anything about his property? There!"

"That's the way to put it," said Miss Sally, nodding to her brother.

"Did he say, for instance," added Brass in a kind of comfortable, cosy tone—"I don't assert that he did say so, mind; I only ask you to refresh your memory—did he say, for instance, that he was a stranger in London—that it was not his humour or within his ability to give any references—that he felt we had a right to require them—and that, in case anything should happen to him at any time, he particularly desired that whatever property he had upon the premises should be considered mine, as some slight recompense for the trouble and annoyance I should sustain—and were you, in short," added Brass, still more comfortably and cosily than before, "were you induced to accept him on my behalf, as a tenant, upon those conditions?"

"Certainly not," replied Dick.

"Why, then, Mr. Richard," said Brass, darting at him a supercilious and reproachful look, "it's my opinion that you've mistaken your calling, and will never make a lawyer."

"Not if you live a thousand years," added Miss Sally. Whereupon the brother and sister took each a noisy pinch of snuff from the little tin box, and fell into a gloomy thoughtfulness.

Nothing further passed up to Mr. Swiveller's dinner-time, which was at three o'clock, and

seemed about three weeks in coming. At the first stroke of the hour, the new clerk disappeared. At the last stroke of five he reappeared, and the office, as if by magic, became fragrant with the smell of gin-and-water, and lemon-peel.

"Mr. Richard," said Brass, "this man's not up yet. Nothing will wake him, sir. What's to be done?"

"I should let him have his sleep out," returned Dick.

"Sleep out!" cried Brass; "why, he has been asleep now six-and-twenty hours. We have been moving chests of drawers over his head, we have knocked double knocks at the street-door, we have made the servant-girl fall down-stairs several times, (she's a light weight, and it don't hurt her much,) but nothing wakes him."

"Perhaps a ladder," suggested Dick, "and getting in at the first-floor window——"

"But then there's a door between; besides, the neighbourhood would be up in arms," said Brass.

"What do you say to getting on the roof of the house through the trap-door, and dropping down the chimney?" suggested Dick.

"That would be an excellent plan," said Brass, "if anybody would be"—and here he looked very hard at Mr. Swiveller—"would be kind, and friendly, and generous enough to undertake it. I dare say it would not be anything like as disagreeable as one supposes."

Dick had made the suggestion, thinking that the duty might possibly fall within Miss Sally's department. As he said nothing further, and declined taking the hint, Mr. Brass was fain to propose that they should go up-stairs together, and make a last effort to awaken the sleeper by some less violent means, which, if they failed on this last trial, must positively be succeeded by stronger measures. Mr. Swiveller, assenting, armed himself with his stool and the large ruler, and repaired with his employer to the scene of action, where Miss Brass was already ringing a hand-bell with all her might, and yet without producing the smallest effect upon their mysterious lodger.

"There are his boots, Mr. Richard!" said Brass.

"Very obstinate-looking articles they are too," quoth Richard Swiveller. And truly they were as sturdy and bluff a pair of boots as one would wish to see; as firmly planted on the ground as if their owner's legs and feet had been in them; and seeming, with their broad soles and blunt toes, to hold possession of their place by main force.



"I can't see anything but the curtain of the bed," said Brass, applying his eye to the keyhole of the door. "Is he a strong man, Mr. Richard?"

"Very," answered Dick.

"It would be an extremely unpleasant circumstance if he was to bounce out suddenly," said Brass. "Keep the stairs clear. I should be more than a match for him, of course, but I'm the master of the house, and the laws of hospitality must be respected.—Hallo there! Hallo, hallo!"

While Mr. Brass, with his eye curiously twisted into the keyhole, uttered these sounds as a means of attracting the lodger's attention, and while Miss Brass plied the hand-bell, Mr. Swiveller put his stool close against the wall by the side of the door, and mounting on the top and standing bolt upright, so that if the lodger did make a rush, he would most probably pass him in its onward fury, began a violent battery with the ruler upon the upper panels of the door. Captivated with his own ingenuity, and confident in the strength of his position, which he had taken up after the method of those hardy individuals who open the pit and gallery doors of theatres on crowded nights, Mr. Swiveller rained down such a shower of blows, that the noise of the bell was drowned; and the small servant, who lingered on the stairs below, ready to fly at a moment's notice, was obliged to hold her ears lest she should be rendered deaf for life.

Suddenly the door was unlocked on the inside, and flung violently open. The small servant fled to the coal-cellar; Miss Sally dived into her own bedroom; Mr. Brass, who was not remarkable for personal courage, ran into the next street, and finding that nobody followed him, armed with a poker or other offensive weapon, put his hands in his pockets, walked very slowly all at once, and whistled.

Meanwhile, Mr. Swiveller, on the top of the stool, drew himself into as flat a shape as possible against the wall, and looked, not unconcernedly, down upon the single gentleman, who appeared at the door growling and cursing in a very awful manner, and, with the boots in his hand, seemed to have an intention of hurling them down-stairs on speculation. This idea, however, he abandoned. He was turning into his room again, still growling vengefully, when his eyes met those of the watchful Richard.

"Have *you* been making that horrible noise?" said the single gentleman.

"I have been helping, sir," returned Dick, keeping his eye upon him, and waving the ruler gently in his right hand, as an indication of what

the single gentleman had to expect if he attempted any violence.

"How dare you, then," said the lodger, "eh?"

To this Dick made no other reply than by inquiring whether the lodger held it to be consistent with the conduct and character of a gentleman to go to sleep for six-and-twenty hours at a stretch, and whether the peace of an amiable and virtuous family was to weigh as nothing in the balance.

"Is my peace nothing?" said the single gentleman.

"Is their peace nothing, sir?" returned Dick. "I don't wish to hold out any threats, sir—in indeed, the law does not allow of threats, for to threaten is an indictable offence—but, if ever you do that again, take care you're not sat upon by the coroner and buried in a cross-road before you wake. We have been distracted with fears that you were dead, sir," said Dick, gently sliding to the ground, "and the short and the long of it is, that we cannot allow single gentlemen to come into this establishment and sleep like double gentlemen without paying extra for it."

"Indeed!" cried the lodger.

"Yes, sir, indeed," returned Dick, yielding to his destiny, and saying whatever came uppermost; "an equal quantity of slumber was never got out of one bed and bedstead, and, if you're going to sleep in that way, you must pay for a double-bedded room."

Instead of being thrown into a greater passion by these remarks, the lodger lapsed into a broad grin, and looked at Mr. Swiveller with twinkling eyes. He was a brown-faced sunburnt man, and appeared browner and more sunburnt from having a white nightcap on. As it was clear that he was a choleric fellow in some respects, Mr. Swiveller was relieved to find him in such good-humour, and, to encourage him in it, smiled himself.

The lodger, in the testiness of being so rudely roused, had pushed his nightcap very much on one side of his bald head. This gave him a rakish eccentric air which, now that he had leisure to observe it, charmed Mr. Swiveller exceedingly; therefore, by way of propitiation, he expressed his hope that the gentleman was going to get up, and further, that he would never do so any more.

"Come here, you impudent rascal!" was the lodger's answer as he re-entered his room.

Mr. Swiveller followed him in, leaving the stool outside, but reserving the ruler in case of a surprise. He rather congratulated himself on his prudence when the single gentleman, without

notice or explanation of any kind, double locked the door.

"Can you drink anything?" was his next inquiry.

Mr. Swiveller replied that he had very recently been assuaging the pangs of thirst, but that he was still open to "a modest quencher," if the materials were at hand. Without another word spoken on either side, the lodger took from his great trunk a kind of temple, shining as of polished silver, and placed it carefully on the table.

Greatly interested in his proceedings, Mr. Swiveller observed him closely. Into one little chamber of this temple he dropped an egg; into another some coffee; into a third a compact piece of raw steak from a neat tin case; into a fourth he poured some water. Then, with the aid of a phosphorus box and some matches, he procured a light and applied it to a spirit-lamp which had a place of its own below the temple; then, he shut down the lids of all the little chambers; then he opened them; and then, by some wonderful and unseen agency, the steak was done, the egg was boiled, the coffee was accurately prepared, and his breakfast was ready.

"Hot water"—said the lodger, handing it to Mr. Swiveller with as much coolness as if he had a kitchen fire before him—"extraordinary rum—sugar—and a travelling glass. Mix for yourself. And make haste."

Dick complied, his eyes wandering all the time from the temple on the table, which seemed to do everything, to the great trunk which seemed to hold everything. The lodger took his breakfast like a man who was used to work these miracles, and thought nothing of them.

"The man of the house is a lawyer, is he not?" said the lodger.

Dick nodded. The rum was amazing.

"The woman of the house—what's she?"

"A dragon," said Dick.

The single gentleman, perhaps because he had met with such things in his travels, or perhaps because he *was* a single gentleman, evinced no surprise, but merely inquired "Wife or sister?" "Sister," said Dick.—"So much the better," said the single gentleman, "he can get rid of her when he likes."

"I want to do as I like, young man," he added after a short silence: "to go to bed when I like, get up when I like, come in when I like, go out when I like,—to be asked no questions, and be surrounded by no spies. In this last respect servants are the devil. There's only one here."

"And a very little one," said Dick.

"And a very little one," repeated the lodger.

"Well, the place will suit me, will it?"

"Yes," said Dick.

"Sharks, I suppose?" said the lodger.

Dick nodded assent, and drained his glass.

"Let them know my humour," said the single gentleman, rising. "If they disturb me, they lose a good tenant. If they know me to be that, they know enough. If they try to know more, it's a notice to quit. It's better to understand these things at once. Good day."

"I beg your pardon," said Dick, halting in his passage to the door, which the lodger prepared to open. "When he who adores thee has left but the name——"

"What do you mean?"

"—But the name," said Dick—"has left but the name—in case of letters or parcels——"

"I never have any," returned the lodger.

"Or in case anybody should call."

"Nobody ever calls on me."

"If any mistake should arise from not having the name, don't say it was my fault, sir," added Dick, still lingering.—"Oh, blame not the bard——"

"I'll blame nobody," said the lodger with such irascibility that in a moment Dick found himself on the staircase, and the locked door between them.

Mr. Brass and Miss Sally were lurking hard by, having been, indeed, only routed from the keyhole by Mr. Swiveller's abrupt exit. As their utmost exertions had not enabled them to overhear a word of the interview, however, in consequence of a quarrel for precedence, which, though limited of necessity to pushes and pinches and such quiet pantomime, had lasted the whole time, they hurried him down to the office to hear his account of the conversation.

This Mr. Swiveller gave them—faithfully as regarded the wishes and character of the single gentleman, and poetically as concerned the great trunk, of which he gave a description more remarkable for brilliancy of imagination than a strict adherence to truth; declaring, with many strong asseverations, that it contained a specimen of every kind of rich food and wine known in these times, and in particular that it was of a self-acting kind, and served up whatever was required, as he supposed by clockwork. He also gave them to understand that the cooking apparatus roasted a fine piece of sirloin of beef, weighing about six pounds avoirdupois, in two minutes and a quarter, as he had himself witnessed, and proved by his sense of taste; and further, that, however the effect was produced, he had distinctly seen water boil and bubble up when the single gentleman winked; from which facts he (Mr. Swiveller) was led to infer that the



lodger was some great conjurer or chemist, or both, whose residence under that roof could not fail at some future day to shed a great credit and distinction on the name of Brass, and add a new interest to the history of Bevis Marks.

There was one point which Mr. Swiveller deemed it unnecessary to enlarge upon, and that was the fact of the modest quencher, which by reason of its intrinsic strength and its coming close upon the heels of the temperate beverage he had discussed at dinner, awakened a slight degree of fever, and rendered necessary two or three other modest quenchers at the public-house in the course of the evening.

### CHAPTER XXXVI.

**A**S the single gentleman, after some weeks' occupation of his lodgings, still declined to correspond, by word or gesture, either with Mr. Brass or his sister Sally, but invariably chose Richard Swiveller as his channel of communication; and as he proved himself in all respects a highly desirable inmate, paying for everything beforehand, giving very little trouble, making no noise, and keeping early hours; Mr. Richard imperceptibly rose to an important position in the family, as one who had influence over this mysterious lodger, and could negotiate with him, for good or evil, when nobody else durst approach his person.

If the truth must be told, even Mr. Swiveller's approaches to the single gentleman were of a very distant kind, and met with small encouragement; but, as he never returned from a monosyllabic conference with the unknown without quoting such expressions as "Swiveller, I know I can rely upon you,"—"I have no hesitation in saying, Swiveller, that I entertain a regard for you,"—"Swiveller, you are my friend, and will stand by me I am sure," with many other short speeches of the same familiar and confiding kind, purporting to have been addressed by the single gentleman to himself, and to form the staple of their ordinary discourse, neither Mr. Brass nor Miss Sally for a moment questioned the extent of his influence, but accorded to him their fullest and most unqualified belief.

But quite apart from, and independent of, this source of popularity, Mr. Swiveller had another, which promised to be equally enduring, and to lighten his position considerably.

He found favour in the eyes of Miss Sally Brass. Let not the light scorners of female

fascination erect their ears to listen to a new tale of love which shall serve them for a jest; for Miss Brass, however accurately formed to be beloved, was not of the loving kind. That amiable virgin, having clung to the skirts of the Law from her earliest youth; having sustained herself by their aid, as it were, in her first running alone, and maintained a firm grasp upon them ever since; had passed her life in a kind of legal childhood. She had been remarkable, when a tender prattler, for an uncommon talent in counterfeiting the walk and manner of a bailiff: in which character she had learned to tap her little playfellows on the shoulder, and to carry them off to imaginary sponging-houses, with a correctness of imitation which was the surprise and delight of all who witnessed her performances, and which was only to be exceeded by her exquisite manner of putting an execution into her doll's house, and taking an exact inventory of the chairs and tables. These artless sports had naturally soothed and cheered the decline of her widowed father: a most exemplary gentleman, (called "old Foxy" by his friends, from his extreme sagacity,) who encouraged them to the utmost, and whose chief regret, on finding that he drew near to Houndsditch churchyard, was, that his daughter could not take out an attorney's certificate and hold a place upon the roll. Filled with this affectionate and touching sorrow, he had solemnly confided her to his son Sampson as an invaluable auxiliary; and from the old gentleman's decease to the period of which we treat, Miss Sally Brass had been the prop and pillar of his business.

It is obvious that, having devoted herself from infancy to this one pursuit and study, Miss Brass could know but little of the world, otherwise than in connection with the law; and that from a lady gifted with such high tastes, proficiency in those gentler and softer arts in which women usually excel was scarcely to be looked for. Miss Sally's accomplishments were all of a masculine and strictly legal kind. They began with the practice of an attorney, and they ended with it. She was in a state of lawful innocence, so to speak. The law had been her nurse. And, as bandy legs or such physical deformities in children are held to be the consequence of bad nursing, so, if in a mind so beautiful any moral twist or bandiness could be found, Miss Sally Brass's nurse was alone to blame.

It was on this lady, then, that Mr. Swiveller burst in full freshness as something new and hitherto undreamed of, lighting up the office with scraps of song and merriment, conjuring with inkstands and boxes of wafers, catching

three oranges in one hand, balancing stools upon his chin and penknives on his nose, and constantly performing a hundred other feats with equal ingenuity; for with such unbendings did Richard, in Mr. Brass's absence, relieve the tedium of his confinement. These social qualities, which Miss Sally first discovered by accident, gradually made such an impression upon her, that she would entreat Mr. Swiveller to relax as though she were not by, which Mr. Swiveller, nothing loath, would readily consent to do. By these means a friendship sprung up between them. Mr. Swiveller gradually came to look upon her as her brother Sampson did, and as he would have looked upon any other clerk. He imparted to her the mystery of going the odd man or plain Newmarket for fruit, ginger-beer, baked potatoes, or even a modest quencher, of which Miss Brass did not scruple to partake. He would often persuade her to undertake his share of writing in addition to her own; nay, he would sometimes reward her with a hearty slap on the back, and protest that she was a devilish good fellow, a jolly dog, and so forth: all of which compliments Miss Sally would receive in entire good part and with perfect satisfaction.

One circumstance troubled Mr. Swiveller's mind very much, and that was that the small servant always remained somewhere in the bowels of the earth under Bevis Marks, and never came to the surface unless the single gentleman rang his bell, when she would answer it and immediately disappear again. She never went out, or came into the office, or had a clean face, or took off the coarse apron, or looked out of any one of the windows, or stood at the street-door for a breath of air, or had any rest or enjoyment whatever. Nobody ever came to see her, nobody spoke of her, nobody cared about her. Mr. Brass had said once that he believed she was a "love-child," (which means anything but a child of love,) and that was all the information Richard Swiveller could obtain.

"It's of no use asking the dragon," thought Dick one day as he sat contemplating the features of Miss Sally Brass. "I suspect, if I asked any questions on that head, our alliance would be at an end. I wonder whether she is a dragon by-the-bye, or something in the mermaid way. She has rather a scaly appearance. But mermaids are fond of looking at themselves in the glass, which she can't be. And they have a habit of combing their hair, which she hasn't. No, she's a dragon."

"Where are you going, old fellow?" said Dick aloud, as Miss Sally wiped her pen as usual on the green dress, and arose from her seat.

"To dinner," answered the dragon.

"To dinner!" thought Dick; "that's another circumstance. I don't believe that small servant ever has anything to eat."

"Sammy won't be home," said Miss Brass. "Stop till I come back. I shan't be long."

Dick nodded, and followed Miss Brass—with his eyes to the door, and with his ears to a little back-parlour, where she and her brother took their meals.

"Now," said Dick, walking up and down with his hands in his pockets, "I'd give something—if I had it—to know how they use that child, and where they keep her. My mother must have been a very inquisitive woman; I have no doubt I'm marked with a note of interrogation somewhere. My feelings I smother, but thou hast been the cause of this anguish my— Upon my word," said Mr. Swiveller, checking himself and falling thoughtfully into the client's chair, "I should like to know how they use her."

After running on in this way for some time, Mr. Swiveller softly opened the office door, with the intention of darting across the street for a glass of the mild porter. At that moment he caught a parting glimpse of the brown head-dress of Miss Brass flitting down the kitchen stairs. "And, by Jove!" thought Dick, "she's going to feed the Marchioness. Now or never!"

First peeping over the handrail and allowing the head-dress to disappear in the darkness below, he groped his way down, and arrived at the door of a back-kitchen immediately after Miss Brass had entered the same, bearing in her hand a cold leg of mutton. It was a very dark miserable place, very low, and very damp: the walls disfigured by a thousand rents and blotches. The water was trickling out of a leaky butt, and a most wretched cat was lapping up the drops with the sickly eagerness of starvation. The grate, which was a wide one, was wound and screwed up tight, so as to hold no more than a little thin sandwich of fire. Everything was locked up; the coal-cellar, the candle-box, the salt-box, the meat-safe, were all padlocked. There was nothing that a beetle could have lunched upon. The pinched and meagre aspect of the place would have killed a chameleon: he would have known, at the first mouthful, that the air was not eatable, and must have given up the ghost in despair.

The small servant stood with humility in presence of Miss Sally, and hung her head.

"Are you there?" said Miss Sally.

"Yes, ma'am," was the answer in a weak voice.



"Go further away from the leg of mutton, or you'll be picking it, I know," said Miss Sally.

The girl withdrew into a corner, while Miss Brass took a key from her pocket, and, opening the safe, brought from it a dreary waste of cold potatoes, looking as catable as Stonehenge. This she placed before the small servant, ordering her to sit down before it, and then, taking up a great carving-knife, made a mighty show of sharpening it upon the carving-fork.

"Do you see this?" said Miss Brass, slicing off about two square inches of cold mutton, after all this preparation, and holding it out on the point of a fork.

The small servant looked hard enough at it with her hungry eyes to see every shred of it, with as it was, and answered, "Yes."

"Then don't you ever go and say," retorted Miss Sally, "that you hadn't meat here. There, eat it up."

This was soon done. "Now, do you want any more?" said Miss Sally.

The hungry creature answered with a faint "No." They were evidently going through an established form.

"You've been helped once to meat," said Miss Brass, summing up the facts; "you have had as much as you can eat, you're asked if you want any more, and you answer, 'No!' Then don't you ever go and say you were allowed, mind that."

With those words, Miss Sally put the meat away and locked the safe, and then, drawing near to the small servant, overlooked her while she finished the potatoes.

It was plain that some extraordinary grudge was working in Miss Brass's gentle breast, and that it was this which impelled her, without the smallest present cause, to rap the child with the blade of the knife, now on her hand, now on her head, and now on her back, as if she found it quite impossible to stand so close to her without administering a few slight knocks. But Mr. Swiveller was not a little surprised to see his fellow-clerk, after walking slowly backwards towards the door, as if she were trying to withdraw herself from the room, but could not accomplish it, dart suddenly forward, and, falling on the small servant, give her some hard blows with her clenched hand. The victim cried, but in a subdued manner, as if she feared to raise her voice, and Miss Sally, comforting herself with a pinch of snuff, ascended the stairs, just as Richard had safely reached the office.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

**T**HE single gentleman, among his other peculiarities—and he had a very plentiful stock, of which he every day furnished some new specimen—took a most extraordinary and remarkable interest in the exhibition of Punch. If the sound of a Punch's voice, at ever so remote a distance, reached Bevis Marks, the single gentleman, though in bed and asleep, would start up, and, hurrying on his clothes, make for the spot with all speed, and presently return at the head of a long procession of idlers, having in the midst the theatre and its proprietors. Straightway the stage would be set up in front of Mr. Brass's house; the single gentleman would establish himself at the first-floor window; and the entertainment would proceed, with all its exciting accompaniments of fife and drum and shout, to the excessive consternation of all sober votaries of business in that silent thoroughfare. It might have been expected that when the play was done, both players and audience would have dispersed; but the epilogue was as bad as the play, for no sooner was the Devil dead than the manager of the puppets and his partner were summoned by the single gentleman to his chamber, where they were regaled with strong waters from his private store, and where they held with him long conversations, the purport of which no human being could fathom. But the secret of these discussions was of little importance. It was sufficient to know that, while they were proceeding, the concourse without still lingered round the house; that boys beat upon the drum with their fists, and imitated Punch with their tender voices; that the office window was rendered opaque by flattened noses, and the keyhole of the street-door luminous with eyes; that every time the single gentleman or either of his guests was seen at the upper window, or so much as the end of one of their noses was visible, there was a great shout of execration from the excluded mob, who remained howling and yelling, and refusing consolation, until the exhibitors were delivered up to them to be attended elsewhere. It was sufficient, in short, to know that Bevis Marks was revolutionised by these popular movements, and that peace and quietness fled from its precincts.

Nobody was rendered more indignant by these proceedings than Mr. Sampson Brass, who, as he could by no means afford to lose so profitable an inmate, deemed it prudent to pocket his lodger's affront along with his cash, and to annoy the audiences who clustered round his door by

such imperfect means of retaliation as were open to him, and which were confined to the trickling down of foul water on their heads from unseen watering-pots, pelting them with fragments of tile and mortar from the roof of the house, and bribing the drivers of hackney cabriolets to come suddenly round the corner, and dash in among them precipitately. It may, at first sight, be matter of surprise to the thoughtless few that Mr. Brass, being a professional gentleman, should not have legally indicted some party or parties, active in the promotion of the nuisance; but

they will be good enough to remember, that as Doctors seldom take their own prescriptions, and Divines do not always practise what they preach, so, lawyers are shy of meddling with the Law on their own account: knowing it to be an edged tool of uncertain application, very expensive in the working, and rather remarkable for its properties of close shaving, than for its always shaving the right person.

"Come," said Mr. Brass one afternoon, "this is two days without a Punch. I'm in hopes he has run through 'em all, at last."



"DO YOU SEE THIS?"

"Why are you in hopes?" returned Miss Sally. "What harm do they do?"

"Here's a pretty sort of a fellow!" cried Brass, laying down his pen in despair. "Now here's an aggravating animal!"

"Well, what harm do they do?" retorted Sally.

"What harm?" cried Brass. "Is it no harm to have a constant hallooing and hooting under one's very nose, distracting one from business, and making one grind one's teeth with vexation? Is it no harm to be blinded and choked up, and have the king's highway stopped with a

set of screamers and roarers whose throats must be made of—of——"

"Brass," suggested Mr. Swiveller.

"Ah! of brass," said the lawyer, glancing at his clerk, to assure himself that he had suggested the word in good faith, and without any sinister intention. "Is that no harm?"

The lawyer stopped short in his invective, and listening for a moment, and recognising the well-known voice, rested his head upon his hand, raised his eyes to the ceiling, and muttered faintly:

"There's another!"



Up went the single gentleman's window directly.

"There's another," repeated Brass; "and if I could get a brake and four blood horses to cut into the Marks when the crowd is at its thickest, I'd give eighteen-pence and never grudge it!"

The distant squeak was heard again. The single gentleman's door burst open. He ran violently down the stairs, out into the street, and so past the window, without any hat, towards the quarter whence the sound proceeded—bent, no doubt, upon securing the strangers' services directly.

"I wish I only knew who his friends were," muttered Sampson, filling his pocket with papers; "if they'd just get up a pretty little Commission *de lunatico* at the Gray's Inn Coffee-house, and give me the job, I'd be content to have the lodgings empty for one while, at all events."

With which words, and knocking his hat over his eyes as if for the purpose of shutting out even a glimpse of the dreadful visitation, Mr. Brass rushed from the house and hurried away.

As Mr. Swiveller was decidedly favourable to these performances, upon the ground that looking at a Punch, or indeed looking at anything out of window, was better than working; and as he had been, for this reason, at some pains to awaken in his fellow-clerk a sense of their beauties and manifold deserts; both he and Miss Sally rose as with one accord, and took up their positions at the window: upon the sill whereof, as in a post of honour, sundry young ladies and gentlemen who were employed in the dry nurture of babies, and who made a point of being present, with their young charges, on such occasions, had already established themselves as comfortably as the circumstances would allow.

The glass being dim, Mr. Swiveller, agreeably to a friendly custom which he had established between them, hitched off the brown head-dress from Miss Sally's head, and dusted it carefully therewith. By the time he had handed it back, and its beautiful wearer had put it on again (which she did with perfect composure and indifference), the lodger returned with the show and showmen at his heels, and a strong addition to the body of spectators. The exhibitor disappeared with all speed behind the drapery; and his partner, stationing himself by the side of the theatre, surveyed the audience with a remarkable expression of melancholy, which became more remarkable still when he breathed a hornpipe tune into that sweet musical instrument which is popularly termed a mouth-organ, without at all changing the mournful expression of the

upper part of his face, though his mouth and chin were, of necessity, in lively spasms.

The drama proceeded to its close, and held the spectators enchained in the customary manner. The sensation which kindles in large assemblies, when they are relieved from a state of breathless suspense and are again free to speak and move, was yet rife, when the lodger, as usual, summoned the men up-stairs.

"Both of you," he called from the window; for only the actual exhibitor—a little fat man—prepared to obey the summons. "I want to talk to you. Come both of you!"

"Come, Tommy," said the little man.

"I an't a talker," replied the other. "Tell him so. What should I go and talk for?"

"Don't you see the gentleman's got a bottle and glass up there?" returned the little man.

"And couldn't you have said so at first?" retorted the other with sudden alacrity. "Now, what are you waiting for? Are you going to keep the gentleman expecting us all day? Haven't you *no* manners?"

With this remonstrance, the melancholy man, who was no other than Mr. Thomas Codlin, pushed past his friend and brother in the craft, Mr. Harris, otherwise Short or Trotters, and hurried before him to the single gentleman's apartment.

"Now, my men," said the single gentleman; "you have done very well. What will you take? Tell that little man behind to shut the door."

"Shut the door, can't you?" said Mr. Codlin, turning gruffly to his friend. "You might have known that the gentleman wanted the door shut, without being told, I think."

Mr. Short obeyed, observing under his breath that his friend seemed unusually "cranky," and expressing a hope that there was no dairy in the neighbourhood, or his temper would certainly spoil its contents.

The gentleman pointed to a couple of chairs, and intimated by an emphatic nod of his head that he expected them to be seated. Messrs. Codlin and Short, after looking at each other with considerable doubt and indecision, at length sat down—each on the extreme edge of the chair pointed out to him—and held their hats very tight, while the single gentleman filled a couple of glasses from a bottle on the table beside him, and presented them in due form.

"You're pretty well browned by the sun both of you," said their entertainer. "Have you been travelling?"

Mr. Short replied in the affirmative with a nod and a smile. Mr. Codlin added a corroborative

nod and a short groan, as if he still felt the weight of the Temple on his shoulders.

"To fairs, markets, races, and so forth, I suppose?" pursued the single gentleman.

"Yes, sir," returned Short, "pretty nigh all over the West of England."

"I have talked to men of your craft from North, East, and South," returned their host in rather a hasty manner; "but I never lighted on any from the West before."

"It's our reg'lar summer circuit is the West, master," said Short: "that's where it is. We takes the East of London in the spring and winter, and the West of England in the summer-time. Many's the hard day's walking in rain and mud, and with never a penny earned, we've had down in the West."

"Let me fill your glass again."

"Much obleeged to you, sir, I think I will," said Mr. Codlin, suddenly thrusting in his own, and turning Short's aside. "I'm the sufferer, sir, in all the travelling, and in all the staying at home. In town or country, wet or dry, hot or cold, Tom Codlin suffers. But Tom Codlin isn't to complain for all that. Oh no! Short may complain, but if Codlin grumbles by so much as a word—oh dear, down with him, down with *him* directly! It isn't *his* place to grumble. That's quite out of the question."

"Codlin an't without his usefulness," observed Short with an arch look, "but he don't always keep his eyes open. He falls asleep sometimes, you know. Remember them last races, Tommy."

"Will you never leave off aggravating a man?" said Codlin. "It's very like I was asleep when five-and-tenpence was collected in one round, isn't it? I was attending to my business, and couldn't have my eyes in twenty places at once, like a peacock, no more than you could. If I an't a match for an old man and a young child, you an't neither, so don't throw that out against me, for the cap fits your head quite as correct as it fits mine."

"You may as well drop the subject, Tom," said Short. "It isn't particular agreeable to the gentleman, I dare say."

"Then you shouldn't have brought it up," returned Mr. Codlin; "and I ask the gentleman's pardon on your account, as a giddy chap that likes to hear himself talk, and don't much care what he talks about, so that he does talk."

Their entertainer had sat perfectly quiet in the beginning of this dispute, looking first at one man and then at the other, as if he were lying in wait for an opportunity of putting some further question, or reverting to that from which the discourse had strayed. But, from the point

where Mr. Codlin was charged with sleepiness, he had shown an increasing interest in the discussion: which now attained a very high pitch.

"You are the two men I want," he said, "the two men I have been looking for, and searching after! Where are that old man and that child you speak of?"

"Sir?" said Short, hesitating and looking towards his friend.

"The old man and his grandchild who travelled with you—where are they? It will be worth your while to speak out, I assure you; much better worth your while than you believe. They left you, you say,—at those races, as I understand. They have been traced to that place, and there lost sight of. Have you no clue, can you suggest no clue, to their recovery?"

"Did I always say, Thomas," cried Short, turning with a look of amazement to his friend, "that there was sure to be an inquiry after them two travellers?"

"You said!" returned Mr. Codlin. "Did I always say that that 'ere blessed child was the most interesting I ever see? Did I always say I loved her, and doted on her? Pretty creetur, I think I hear her now. 'Codlin's my friend,' she says with a tear of gratitude trickling down her little eye; 'Codlin's my friend,' she says—'not Short. Short's very well,' she says; 'I've no quarrel with Short; he means kind, I dare say: but Codlin,' she says, 'has the feelings for *my* money, though he mayn't look it.'"

Repeating these words with great emotion, Mr. Codlin rubbed the bridge of his nose with his coat-sleeve, and shaking his head mournfully from side to side, left the single gentleman to infer that, from the moment when he lost sight of his dear young charge, his peace of mind and happiness had fled.

"Good Heaven!" said the single gentleman, pacing up and down the room, "have I found these men at last, only to discover that they can give me no information or assistance? It would have been better to have lived on in hope, from day to day, and never to have lighted on them, than to have my expectations scattered thus."

"Stay a minute," said Short. "A man of the name of Jerry—you know Jerry, Thomas?"

"Oh, don't talk to me of Jerrys!" replied Mr. Codlin. "How can I care a pinch of snuff for Jerrys, when I think of that 'ere darling child? 'Codlin's my friend,' she says, 'dear, good, kind Codlin, as is always a devising pleasures for me! I don't object to Short,' she says, 'but I cotton to Codlin.' Once," said that gentleman reflectively, "she called me Father Codlin. I thought I should have bust!"



"A man of the name of Jerry, sir," said Short, turning from his selfish colleague to their new acquaintance, "wot keeps a company of dancing dogs, told me, in a accidental sort of a way, that he had seen the old gentleman in connection with a travelling wax-work, unbeknown to him. As they'd give us the slip, and nothing had come of it, and this was down in the country that he'd been seen, I took no measures about it, and asked no questions. But I can, if you like."

"Is this man in town?" said the impatient single gentleman. "Speak faster."

"No, he isn't, but he will be to-morrow, for he lodges in our house," replied Mr. Short rapidly.

"Then bring him here," said the single gentleman. "Here's a sovereign apiece. If I can find these people through your means, it is but a prelude to twenty more. Return to me to-morrow, and keep your own counsel on this subject, though I need hardly tell you that, for you'll do so for your own sakes. Now, give me your address, and leave me."

The address was given, the two men departed, the crowd went with them, and the single gentleman for two mortal hours walked in uncommon agitation up and down his room, over the wondering heads of Mr. Swiveller and Miss Sally Brass.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

**K**IT—for it happens, at this juncture, not only that we have breathing-time to follow his fortunes, but that the necessities of these adventures so adapt themselves to our ease and inclination as to call upon us imperatively to pursue the track we most desire to take—Kit, while the matters treated of in the last fifteen chapters were yet in progress, was, as the reader may suppose, gradually familiarising himself more and more with Mr. and Mrs. Garland, Mr. Abel, the pony, and Barbara, and gradually coming to consider them one and all as his particular private friends, and Abel Cottage, Finchley, as his own proper home.

Stay—the words are written, and may go, but if they convey any notion that Kit, in the plentiful board and comfortable lodging of his new abode, began to think slightly of the poor fare and furniture of his old dwelling, they do their office badly, and commit injustice. Who so mindful of those he left at home—albeit they were but a mother and two young babies—as Kit? What boastful father, in the fulness of his heart,

ever related such wonders of his infant prodigy as Kit never wearied of telling Barbara in the evening-time concerning little Jacob? Was there ever such a mother as Kit's mother, on her son's showing; or was there ever such comfort in poverty as in the poverty of Kit's family, if any correct judgment might be arrived at from his own glowing account?

And let me linger in this place, for an instant, to remark that, if ever household affections and loves are graceful things, they are graceful in the poor. The ties that bind the wealthy and the proud to home may be forged on earth, but those which link the poor man to his humble hearth are of the truer metal, and bear the stamp of Heaven. The man of high descent may love the halls and lands of his inheritance as a part of himself: as trophies of his birth and power; his associations with them are associations of pride and wealth and triumph; the poor man's attachment to the tenement he holds, which strangers have held before, and may to-morrow occupy again, has a worthier root, struck deep into a purer soil. His household gods are of flesh and blood, with no alloy of silver, gold, or precious stone; he has no property but in the affections of his own heart; and when they endear bare floors and walls, despite of rags and toil and scanty fare, that man has his love of home from God, and his rude hut becomes a solemn place.

Oh! if those who rule the destinies of nations would but remember this—if they would but think how hard it is for the very poor to have engendered in their hearts that love of home from which all domestic virtues spring, when they live in dense and squalid masses where social decency is lost, or rather never found—if they would but turn aside from the wide thoroughfares and great houses, and strive to improve the wretched dwellings in by-ways where only Poverty may walk—many low roofs would point more truly to the sky than the loftiest steeple that now rears proudly up from the midst of guilt, and crime, and horrible disease, to mock them by its contrast. In hollow voices from Workhouse, Hospital, and Gaol, this truth is preached from day to day, and has been proclaimed for years. It is no light matter—no outcry from the working vulgar—no mere question of the people's health and comforts that may be whistled down on Wednesday nights. In love of home, the love of country has its rise; and who are the truer patriots, or the better in time of need—those who venerate the land, owning its wood, and stream, and earth, and all that they produce; or those who love their

country, boasting not a foot of ground in all its wide domain?

Kit knew nothing about such questions, but he knew that his old home was a very poor place, and that his new one was very unlike it, and yet he was constantly looking back with grateful satisfaction and affectionate anxiety, and often indited square-folded letters to his mother, enclosing a shilling or eighteen-pence, or such other small remittance, which Mr. Abel's liberality enabled him to make. Sometimes, being in the neighbourhood, he had leisure to call upon her, and then, great was the joy and pride of Kit's mother, and extremely noisy the satisfaction of little Jacob and the baby, and cordial the congratulations of the whole court, who listened with admiring ears to the accounts of Abel Cottage, and could never be told too much of its wonders and magnificence.

Although Kit was in the very highest favour with the old lady and gentleman, and Mr. Abel, and Barbara, it is certain that no member of the family evinced such a remarkable partiality for him as the self-willed pony, who, from being the most obstinate and opinionated pony on the face of the earth, was, in his hands, the meekest and most tractable of animals. It is true that in exact proportion as he became manageable by Kit he became utterly ungovernable by anybody else, (as if he had determined to keep him in the family at all risks and hazards,) and that, even under the guidance of his favourite, he would sometimes perform a great variety of strange freaks and capers, to the extreme discomposure of the old lady's nerves; but as Kit always represented that this was only his fun, or a way he had of showing his attachment to his employers, Mrs. Garland gradually suffered herself to be persuaded into the belief, in which she at last became so strongly confirmed, that if, in one of these ebullitions, he had overturned the chaise, she would have been quite satisfied that he did it with the very best intentions.

Besides becoming in a short time a perfect marvel in all stable matters, Kit soon made himself a very tolerable gardener, a handy fellow within doors, and an indispensable attendant on Mr. Abel, who every day gave him some new proof of his confidence and approbation. Mr. Witherden the notary, too, regarded him with a friendly eye; and even Mr. Chuckster would sometimes condescend to give him a slight nod, or to honour him with that peculiar form of recognition which is called "taking a sight," or to favour him with some other salute combining pleasantry with patronage.

One morning Kit drove Mr. Abel to the

notary's office, as he sometimes did, and, having set him down at the house, was about to drive off to a livery stable hard by, when this same Mr. Chuckster emerged from the office door, and cried "Woa-a-a-a-a!"—dwelling upon the note a long time, for the purpose of striking terror into the pony's heart, and asserting the supremacy of man over the inferior animals.

"Pull up, Snobby," cried Mr. Chuckster, addressing himself to Kit. "You're wanted inside here."

"Has Mr. Abel forgotten anything, I wonder?" said Kit as he dismounted.

"Ask no questions, Snobby," returned Mr. Chuckster, "but go and see. Woa-a-a then, will you? If that pony was mine, I'd break him."

"You must be very gentle with him, if you please," said Kit, "or you'll find him troublesome. You'd better not keep on pulling his ears, please. I know he won't like it."

To this remonstrance Mr. Chuckster deigned no other answer than addressing Kit with a lofty and distant air as "young feller," and requesting him to cut, and come again with all speed. The "young feller" complying, Mr. Chuckster put his hands in his pockets, and tried to look as if he were not minding the pony, but happening to be lounging there by accident.

Kit scraped his shoes very carefully, (for he had not yet lost his reverence for the bundles of papers and the tin boxes,) and tapped at the office door, which was quickly opened by the notary himself.

"Oh! come in, Christopher," said Mr. Witherden.

"Is that the lad?" asked an elderly gentleman, but of a stout, bluff figure—who was in the room.

"That's the lad," said Mr. Witherden. "He fell in with my client, Mr. Garland, sir, at this very door. I have reason to think he is a good lad, sir, and that you may believe what he says. Let me introduce Mr. Abel Garland, sir—his young master; my articulated pupil, sir, and most particular friend:—my most particular friend, sir," repeated the notary, drawing out his silk handkerchief and flourishing it about his face.

"Your servant, sir," said the stranger gentleman.

"Yours, sir, I'm sure," replied Mr. Abel mildly. "You were wishing to speak to Christopher, sir."

"Yes, I was. Have I your permission?"

"By all means."

"My business is no secret; or I should rather say it need be no secret *here*," said the stranger, observing that Mr. Abel and the notary were preparing to retire. "It relates to a dealer



in curiosities with whom he lived, and in whom I am earnestly and warmly interested. I have been a stranger to this country, gentlemen, for very many years, and, if I am deficient in form and ceremony, I hope you will forgive me."

"No forgiveness is necessary, sir;—none whatever," replied the notary. And so said Mr. Abel.

"I have been making inquiries in the neighbourhood in which his old master lived," said the stranger, "and I learn that he was served by this lad. I have found out his mother's house, and have been directed by her to this place as the nearest in which I should be likely to find him. That's the cause of my presenting myself here this morning."

"I am very glad of any cause, sir," said the notary, "which procures me the honour of this visit."

"Sir," retorted the stranger, "you speak like a mere man of the world, and I think you something better. Therefore, pray do not sink your real character in paying unmeaning compliments to me."

"Hem!" coughed the notary. "You're a plain speaker, sir."

"And a plain dealer," returned the stranger. "It may be my long absence and inexperience that lead me to the conclusion; but, if plain speakers are scarce in this part of the world, I fancy plain dealers are still scarcer. If my speaking shall offend you, sir, my dealing, I hope, will make amends."

Mr. Witherden seemed a little disconcerted by the elderly gentleman's mode of conducting the dialogue; and as for Kit, he looked at him in open-mouthed astonishment: wondering what kind of language he would address to him, if he talked in that free and easy way to a notary. It was with no harshness, however, though with something of constitutional irritability and haste, that he turned to Kit and said:

"If you think, my lad, that I am pursuing these inquiries with any other view than that of serving and reclaiming those I am in search of, you do me a very great wrong, and deceive yourself. Don't be deceived, I beg of you, but rely upon my assurance. The fact is, gentlemen," he added, turning again to the notary and his pupil, "that I am in a very painful and wholly unexpected position. I came to this city with a darling object at my heart, expecting to find no obstacle or difficulty in the way of its attainment. I find myself suddenly checked and stopped short, in the execution of my design, by a mystery which I cannot penetrate. Every effort I have made to penetrate it, has only served to

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render it darker and more obscure; and I am afraid to stir openly in the matter, lest those whom I anxiously pursue should fly still farther from me. I assure you that, if you could give me any assistance, you would not be sorry to do so, if you knew how greatly I stand in need of it, and what a load it would relieve me from."

There was a simplicity in this confidence which occasioned it to find a quick response in the breast of the good-natured notary, who replied, in the same spirit, that the stranger had not mistaken his desire, and that, if he could be of service to him, he would most readily.

Kit was then put under examination, and closely questioned by the unknown gentleman touching his old master and the child, their lonely way of life, their retired habits, and strict seclusion. The nightly absence of the old man, the solitary existence of the child at those times, his illness and recovery, Quilp's possession of the house, and their sudden disappearance, were all the subjects of much questioning and answer. Finally, Kit informed the gentleman that the premises were now to let, and that a board upon the door referred all inquirers to Mr. Sampson Brass, Solicitor, of Bevis Marks, from whom he might perhaps learn some further particulars.

"Not by inquiry," said the gentleman, shaking his head. "I live there."

"Live at Brass's the attorney's!" cried Mr. Witherden in some surprise: having professional knowledge of the gentleman in question.

"Ay," was the reply. "I entered on his lodgings t'other day, chiefly because I had seen this very board. It matters little to me where I live, and I had a desperate hope that some intelligence might be cast in my way there, which would not reach me elsewhere. Yes, I live at Brass's—more shame for me, I suppose?"

"That's a mere matter of opinion," said the notary, shrugging his shoulders. "He is looked upon as rather a doubtful character."

"Doubtful?" echoed the other. "I am glad to hear there's any doubt about it. I supposed that had been thoroughly settled long ago. But will you let me speak a word or two with you in private?"

Mr. Witherden consenting, they walked into that gentleman's private closet, and remained there, in close conversation, for some quarter of an hour, when they returned into the outer office. The stranger had left his hat in Mr. Witherden's room, and seemed to have established himself, in this short interval, on quite a friendly footing.

"I'll not detain you any longer now," he said, putting a crown into Kit's hand, and looking to-

wards the notary. "You shall hear from me again. Not a word of this, you know, except to your master and mistress."

"Mother, sir, would be glad to know——" said Kit, faltering.

"Glad to know what?"

"Anything—so that it was no harm—about Miss Nell."

"Would she? Well, then, you may tell her if she can keep a secret. But mind, not a word of this to anybody else. Don't forget that. Be particular."

"I'll take care, sir," said Kit. "Thankee, sir, and good morning."

Now, it happened that the gentleman, in his anxiety to impress upon Kit that he was not to tell anybody what had passed between them, followed him out to the door to repeat his caution, and it further happened that at that moment the eyes of Mr. Richard Swiveller were turned in that direction, and beheld his mysterious friend and Kit together.

It was quite an accident, and the way in which it came about was this. Mr. Chuckster, being a gentleman of a cultivated taste and refined spirit, was one of that Lodge of Glorious Apollos, whereof Mr. Swiveller was Perpetual Grand. Mr. Swiveller, passing through the street in the execution of some Brazen errand, and beholding one of his Glorious Brotherhood intently gazing on a pony, crossed over to give him that fraternal greeting with which Perpetual Grands are, by the very constitution of their office, bound to cheer and encourage their disciples. He had scarcely bestowed upon him his blessing, and followed it with a general remark touching the present state and prospects of the weather, when, lifting up his eyes, he beheld the single gentleman of Bevis Marks in earnest conversation with Christopher Nubbles.

"Hallo!" said Dick, "who *is* that?"

"He called to see my Governor this morning," replied Mr. Chuckster; "beyond that I don't know him from Adam."

"At least you know his name?" said Dick.

To which Mr. Chuckster replied, with an elevation of speech becoming a Glorious Apollo, that he was "everlastingly blessed" if he did.

"All I know, my dear feller," said Mr. Chuckster, running his fingers through his hair, "is, that he is the cause of my having stood here twenty minutes, for which I hate him with a mortal and undying hatred, and would pursue him to the confines of eternity if I could afford the time."

While they were thus discoursing, the subject

of their conversation (who had not appeared to recognise Mr. Richard Swiveller) re-entered the house, and Kit came down the steps and joined them; to whom Mr. Swiveller again propounded his inquiry with no better success.

"He is a very nice gentleman, sir," said Kit, "and that's all I know about him."

Mr. Chuckster waxed wroth at this answer, and, without applying the remark to any particular case, mentioned, as a general truth, that it was expedient to break the heads of Snobs, and to tweak their noses. Without expressing his concurrence in this sentiment, Mr. Swiveller, after a few moments of abstraction, inquired which way Kit was driving, and, being informed, declared it was his way, and that he would trespass on him for a lift. Kit would gladly have declined the proffered honour, but, as Mr. Swiveller was already established in the seat beside him, he had no means of doing so, otherwise than by a forcible ejection, and therefore drove briskly off—so briskly, indeed, as to cut short the leave-taking between Mr. Chuckster and his Grand Master, and to occasion the former gentleman some inconvenience from having his corns squeezed by the impatient pony.

As Whisker was tired of standing, and Mr. Swiveller was kind enough to stimulate him by shrill whistles and various sporting cries, they rattled off at too sharp a pace to admit of much conversation: especially as the pony, incensed by Mr. Swiveller's admonitions, took a particular fancy for the lamp-posts and cart wheels, and evinced a strong desire to run on the pavement and rasp himself against the brick walls. It was not, therefore, until they had arrived at the stable, and the chaise had been extricated from a very small doorway, in which the pony dragged it under the impression that he could take it along with him into his usual stall, that Mr. Swiveller found time to talk.

"It's hard work," said Richard. "What do you say to some beer?"

Kit at first declined, but presently consented, and they adjourned to the neighbouring bar together.

"We'll drink our friend what's-his-name," said Dick, holding up the bright frothy pot; "that was talking to you this morning, you know—I know him—a good fellow, but eccentric—very—here's what's-his-name."

Kit pledged him.

"He lives in my house," said Dick; "at least, in the house occupied by the firm in which I'm a sort of a—of a managing partner—a difficult fellow to get anything out of, but we like him—we like him."



"I must be going, sir, if you please," said Kit, moving away.

"Don't be in a hurry, Christopher," replied his patron; "we'll drink your mother."

"Thank you, sir."

"An excellent woman that mother of yours, Christopher," said Mr. Swiveller. "Who ran to catch me when I fell, and kissed the place to make it well? My mother. A charming woman. He's a liberal sort of fellow. We must get him to do something *for* your mother. Does he know her, Christopher?"

Kit shook his head, and, glancing slyly at his questioner, thanked him, and made off before he could say another word.

"Humph!" said Mr. Swiveller, pondering, "this is queer. Nothing but mysteries in connection with Brass's house. I'll keep my own counsel, however. Everybody and anybody has been in my confidence as yet, but now I think I'll set up in business for myself. Queer—very queer!"

After pondering deeply and with a face of exceeding wisdom for some time, Mr. Swiveller drank some more of the beer, and, summoning a small boy who had been watching his proceedings, poured forth the few remaining drops as a libation on the gravel, and bade him carry the empty vessel to the bar with his compliments, and above all things to lead a sober and temperate life, and abstain from all intoxicating and exciting liquors. Having given him this piece of moral advice for his trouble (which, as he wisely observed, was far better than halfpence), the Perpetual Grand Master of the Glorious Apollos thrust his hands into his pockets and sauntered away: still pondering as he went.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

**A**LL that day, though he waited for Mr. Abel until evening, Kit kept clear of his mother's house, determined not to anticipate the pleasures of the morrow, but to let them come in their full rush of delight; for to-morrow was the great and long-looked-for epoch in his life—to-morrow was the end of his first quarter—the day of receiving, for the first time, one fourth part of his annual income of Six Pounds in one vast sum of Thirty Shillings—to-morrow was to be a half-holiday devoted to a whirl of entertainments, and little Jacob was to know what oysters meant, and to see a play.

All manner of incidents combined in favour

of the occasion: not only had Mr. and Mrs. Garland forewarned him that they intended to make no deduction for his outfit from the great amount, but to pay it him unbroken in all its gigantic grandeur; not only had the unknown gentleman increased the stock by the sum of five shillings, which was a perfect god-send, and in itself a fortune; not only had these things come to pass which nobody could have calculated upon, or in their wildest dreams have hoped; but it was Barbara's quarter too—Barbara's quarter, that very day—and Barbara had a half-holiday as well as Kit, and Barbara's mother was going to make one of the party, and to take tea with Kit's mother, and cultivate her acquaintance.

To be sure Kit looked out of his window very early that morning to see which way the clouds were flying, and to be sure Barbara would have been at hers too, if she had not sat up so late overnight, starching and ironing small pieces of muslin, and crimping them into frills, and sewing them on to other pieces to form magnificent wholes for the next day's wear. But they were both up very early for all that, and had small appetites for breakfast and less for dinner, and were in a state of great excitement when Barbara's mother came in, with astonishing accounts of the fineness of the weather out of doors (but with a very large umbrella notwithstanding, for people like Barbara's mother seldom make holiday without one), and when the bell rung for them to go up-stairs and receive their quarter's money in gold and silver.

Well, wasn't Mr. Garland kind when he said, "Christopher, here's your money, and you have earned it well;" and wasn't Mrs. Garland kind when she said, "Barbara, here's yours, and I am much pleased with you;" and didn't Kit sign his name bold to his receipt, and didn't Barbara sign her name all a trembling to hers; and wasn't it beautiful to see how Mrs. Garland poured out Barbara's mother a glass of wine; and didn't Barbara's mother speak up when she said, "Here's blessing you, ma'am, as a good lady, and you, sir, as a good gentleman, and Barbara, my love to you, and here's towards you, Mr. Christopher;" and wasn't she as long drinking it as if it had been a tumblerful; and didn't she look genteel, standing there with her gloves on; and wasn't there plenty of laughing and talking among them as they reviewed all these things upon the top of the coach; and didn't they pity the people who hadn't got a holiday?

But Kit's mother, again—wouldn't anybody have supposed she had come of a good stock, and been a lady all her life? There she was,

quite ready to receive them, with a display of tea-things that might have warmed the heart of a china shop; and little Jacob and the baby in such a state of perfection that their clothes looked as good as new, though Heaven knows they were old enough! Didn't she say, before they had sat down five minutes, that Barbara's mother was exactly the sort of lady she expected, and didn't Barbara's mother say that Kit's mother was the very picture of what *she* had expected, and didn't Kit's mother compliment Barbara's mother on Barbara, and didn't Barbara's mother compliment Kit's mother on Kit, and wasn't Barbara herself quite fascinated with little Jacob, and did ever a child show off, when he was wanted, as that child did, or make such friends as he made?

"And we are both widows too!" said Barbara's mother. "We must have been made to know each other."

"I haven't a doubt about it," returned Mrs. Nubbles. "And what a pity it is we didn't know each other sooner!"

"But then, you know, it's such a pleasure," said Barbara's mother, "to have it brought about by one's son and daughter, that it's fully made up for. Now, ain't it?"

To this Kit's mother yielded her full assent, and tracing things back from effects to causes, they naturally reverted to their deceased husbands, respecting whose lives, deaths, and burials, they compared notes, and discovered sundry circumstances that tallied with wonderful exactness; such as Barbara's father having been exactly four years and ten months older than Kit's father, and one of them having died on a Wednesday and the other on a Thursday, and both of them having been of a very fine make and remarkably good-looking, with other extraordinary coincidences. These recollections being of a kind calculated to cast a shadow on the brightness of the holiday, Kit diverted the conversation to general topics, and they were soon in great force again, and as merry as before. Among other things, Kit told them about his old place, and the extraordinary beauty of Nell (of whom he had talked to Barbara a thousand times already); but the last-named circumstance failed to interest his hearers to anything like the extent he had supposed, and even his mother said (looking accidentally at Barbara at the same time) that there was no doubt Miss Nell was very pretty, but she was but a child after all, and there were many young women quite as pretty as she; and Barbara mildly observed that she should think so, and that she never could help believing Mr. Christopher must be under a mistake—

which Kit wondered at very much, not being able to conceive what reason she had for doubting him. Barbara's mother, too, observed that it was very common for young folks to change at about fourteen or fifteen, and whereas they had been very pretty before, to grow up quite plain; which truth she illustrated by many forcible examples, especially one of a young man, who, being a builder with great prospects, had been particular in his attentions to Barbara, but whom Barbara would have nothing to say to; which (though everything happened for the best) she almost thought was a pity. Kit said he thought so too, and so he did honestly, and he wondered what made Barbara so silent all at once, and why his mother looked at him as if he shouldn't have said it.

However, it was high time now to be thinking of the play; for which great preparation was required, in the way of shawls and bonnets, not to mention one handkerchief full of oranges and another of apples, which took some time tying up, in consequence of the fruit having a tendency to roll out at the corners. At length everything was ready, and they went off very fast; Kit's mother carrying the baby, who was dreadfully wide awake, and Kit holding little Jacob in one hand, and escorting Barbara with the other—a state of things which occasioned the two mothers, who walked behind, to declare that they looked quite family folks, and caused Barbara to blush and say, "Now don't, mother!" But Kit said she had no call to mind what they said; and indeed she need not have had, if she had known how very far from Kit's thoughts any love-making was. Poor Barbara!

At last they got to the theatre, which was Astley's; and in some two minutes after they had reached the yet unopened door, little Jacob was squeezed flat, and the baby had received divers concussions, and Barbara's mother's umbrella had been carried several yards off, and passed back to her over the shoulders of the people, and Kit had hit a man on the head with the handkerchief of apples for "scrowdging" his parent with unnecessary violence, and there was a great uproar. But, when they were once past the pay-place and tearing away for very life with their checks in their hands, and, above all, when they were fairly in the theatre, and seated in such places that they couldn't have had better if they had picked them out, and taken them beforehand, all this was looked upon as quite a capital joke, and an essential part of the entertainment.

Dear, dear, what a place it looked, that Astley's! with all the paint, gilding, and looking-



glass : the vague smell of horses suggestive of coming wonders ; the curtain that hid such gorgeous mysteries ; the clean white sawdust down in the circus ; the company coming in and taking their places ; the fiddlers looking carelessly up at them while they tuned their instruments, as if they didn't want the play to begin, and knew it all beforehand ! What a glow was that which burst upon them all, when that long, clear, brilliant row of lights came slowly up ; and what the

feverish excitement when the little bell rang and the music began in good earnest, with strong parts for the drums, and sweet effects for the triangles ! Well might Barbara's mother say to Kit's mother that the gallery was the place to see from, and wonder it wasn't much dearer than the boxes ; well might Barbara feel doubtful whether to laugh or cry in her flutter of delight.

Then the play itself ! the horses which little



"AT LENGTH EVERYTHING WAS READY, AND THEY WENT OFF."

Jacob believed from the first to be alive, and the ladies and gentlemen of whose reality he could be by no means persuaded, having never seen or heard anything at all like them—the fring, which made Barbara wink—the forlorn lady, who made her cry—the tyrant, who made her tremble—the man who sang the song with the lady's-maid and danced the chorus, who made her laugh—the pony who reared up on his hind-legs when he saw the murderer, and wouldn't hear of walking on all fours again until he was

taken into custody—the clown who ventured on such familiarities with the military man in boots—the lady who jumped over the nine-and-twenty ribbons and came down safe upon the horse's back—everything was delightful, splendid, and surprising ! Little Jacob applauded till his hands were sore. Kit cried "an-kor" at the end of everything, the three-act piece included ; and Barbara's mother beat her umbrella on the floor, in her ecstasies, until it was nearly worn down to the gingham.

In the midst of all these fascinations, Barbara's thoughts seemed to have been still running on what Kit had said at tea-time; for, when they were coming out of the play, she asked him, with an hysterical simper, if Miss Nell was as handsome as the lady who jumped over the ribbons.

"As handsome as *her*?" said Kit. "Double as handsome."

"Oh, Christopher! I'm sure she was the beautifullest creature ever was," said Barbara.

"Nonsense!" returned Kit. "She was well enough. I don't deny that; but think how she was dressed and painted, and what a difference that made. Why, *you* are a good deal better-looking than her, Barbara."

"Oh, Christopher!" said Barbara, looking down.

"You are, any day," said Kit, "and so's your mother."

Poor Barbara!

What was all this though—even all this—the extraordinary dissipation that ensued, when Kit, walking into an oyster shop as bold as if he lived there, and not so much as looking at the counter or the man behind it, led his party into a box—a private box, fitted up with red curtains, white table-cloth, and cruet-stand complete—and ordered a fierce gentleman with whiskers, who acted as waiter and called him, him, Christopher Nubbles, "sir," to bring three dozen of his largest-sized oysters, and to look sharp about it? Yes, Kit told this gentleman to look sharp, and he not only said he would look sharp, but he actually did, and presently came running back with the newest loaves, and the freshest butter, and the largest oysters, ever seen. Then said Kit to this gentleman, "A pot of beer"—just so—and the gentleman, instead of replying, "Sir, did you address that language to me?" only said, "Pot o' beer, sir? yes, sir," and went off and fetched it, and put it on the table in a small decanter-stand, like those which blind men's dogs carry about the streets in their mouths, to catch the halfpence in; and both Kit's mother and Barbara's mother declared, as he turned away, that he was one of the slimmest and gracefulest young men she had ever looked upon.

Then they fell to work upon the supper in earnest; and there was Barbara, that foolish Barbara, declaring that she couldn't eat more than two, and wanting more pressing than you would believe before she would eat four: though her mother and Kit's mother made up for it pretty well, and ate and laughed and enjoyed themselves so thoroughly that it did Kit good to

see them, and made him laugh and eat likewise from strong sympathy. But the greatest miracle of the night was little Jacob, who ate oysters as if he had been born and bred to the business—sprinkled the pepper and the vinegar with a discretion beyond his years—and afterwards built a grotto on the table with the shells. There was the baby, too, who had never closed an eye all night, but had sat as good as gold, trying to force a large orange into his mouth, and gazing intently at the lights in the chandelier—there he was, sitting up in his mother's lap, staring at the gas without winking, and making indentations in his soft visage with an oyster shell, to that degree that a heart of iron must have loved him! In short, there never was a more successful supper; and when Kit ordered in a glass of something hot to finish with, and proposed Mr. and Mrs. Garland before sending it round, there were not six happier people in all the world.

But all happiness has an end—hence the chief pleasure of its next beginning—and as it was now growing late, they agreed it was time to turn their faces homewards. So, after going a little out of their way to see Barbara and Barbara's mother safe to a friend's house where they were to pass the night, Kit and his mother left them at the door, with an early appointment for returning to Finchley next morning, and a great many plans for next quarter's enjoyment. Then, Kit took little Jacob on his back, and giving his arm to his mother, and a kiss to the baby, they all trudged merrily home together.

## CHAPTER XL.

**F**ULL of that vague kind of penitence which holidays awaken next morning, Kit turned out at sunrise, and, with his faith in last night's enjoyments a little shaken by cool daylight and the return to every-day duties and occupations, went to meet Barbara and her mother at the appointed place. And being careful not to awaken any of the little household, who were yet resting from their unusual fatigues, Kit left his money on the chimney-piece, with an inscription in chalk calling his mother's attention to the circumstance, and informing her that it came from her dutiful son; and went his way, with a heart something heavier than his pockets, but free from any very great oppression notwithstanding.

Oh these holidays! Why will they leave us some regret? Why cannot we push them back



only a week or two in our memories, so as to put them at once at that convenient distance whence they may be regarded either with a calm indifference or a pleasant effort of recollection? Why will they hang about us like the flavour of yesterday's wine, suggestive of headaches and lassitude, and those good intentions for the future, which, under the earth, form the everlasting pavement of a large estate, and, upon it, usually endure until dinner-time or thereabouts?

Who will wonder that Barbara had a headache, or that Barbara's mother was disposed to be cross, or that she slightly underrated Astley's, and thought the clown was older than they had taken him to be last night? Kit was not surprised to hear her say so—not he. He had already had a misgiving that the inconstant actors in that dazzling vision had been doing the same thing the night before last, and would do it again that night, and the next, and for weeks and months to come, though he would not be there. Such is the difference between yesterday and to-day. We are all going to the play, or coming home from it.

However, the Sun himself is weak when he first rises, and gathers strength and courage as the day gets on. By degrees, they began to recall circumstances more and more pleasant in their nature, until, what between talking, walking, and laughing, they reached Finchley in such good heart, that Barbara's mother declared she never felt less tired or in better spirits. And so said Kit. Barbara had been silent all the way, but she said so too. Poor little Barbara! She was very quiet.

They were at home in such good time that Kit had rubbed down the pony, and made him as spruce as a race-horse, before Mr. Garland came down to breakfast; which punctual and industrious conduct the old lady, and the old gentleman, and Mr. Abel highly extolled. At his usual hour (or rather, at his usual minute and second, for he was the soul of punctuality) Mr. Abel walked out, to be overtaken by the London coach, and Kit and the old gentleman went to work in the garden.

This was not the least pleasant of Kit's employments. On a fine day they were quite a family party; the old lady sitting hard by with her work-basket on a little table; the old gentleman digging, or pruning, or clipping about with a large pair of shears, or helping Kit in some way or other with great assiduity; and Whisker looking on from his paddock in placid contemplation of them all. To-day they were to trim the grape-vine, so Kit mounted half-way up a short ladder, and began to snip and hammer

away, while the old gentleman, with a great interest in his proceedings, handed up the nails and shreds of cloth as he wanted them. The old lady and Whisker looked on as usual.

"Well, Christopher," said Mr. Garland, "and so you have made a new friend, eh?"

"I beg your pardon, sir?" returned Kit, looking down from the ladder.

"You have made a new friend, I hear from Mr. Abel," said the old gentleman, "at the office."

"Oh—yes, sir, yes! He behaved very handsomely, sir."

"I'm glad to hear it," returned the old gentleman with a smile. "He is disposed to behave more handsomely still, though, Christopher."

"Indeed, sir! It's very kind in him, but I don't want him to, I'm sure," said Kit, hammering stoutly at an obdurate nail.

"He is rather anxious," pursued the old gentleman, "to have you in his own service. Take care what you're doing, or you will fall down and hurt yourself."

"To have me in his service, sir!" cried Kit, who had stopped short in his work and faced about on the ladder like some dexterous tumbler. "Why, sir, I don't think he can be in earnest when he says that."

"Oh! But he is indeed," said Mr. Garland. "And he has told Mr. Abel so."

"I never heard of such a thing!" muttered Kit, looking ruefully at his master and mistress. "I wonder at him; that I do."

"You see, Christopher," said Mr. Garland, "this is a point of much importance to you, and you should understand and consider it in that light. This gentleman is able to give you more money than I—not, I hope, to carry through the various relations of master and servant more kindness and confidence, but certainly, Christopher, to give you more money."

"Well," said Kit, "after that, sir——"

"Wait a moment," interposed Mr. Garland. "That is not all. You were a very faithful servant to your old employers, as I understand, and should this gentleman recover them, as it is his purpose to attempt doing by every means in his power, I have no doubt that you, being in his service, would meet with your reward. Besides," added the old gentleman with stronger emphasis, "besides having the pleasure of being again brought into communication with those to whom you seem to be so very strongly and disinterestedly attached. You must think of all this, Christopher, and not be rash or hasty in your choice."

Kit did suffer one twinge, one momentary

pang, in keeping the resolution he had already formed, when this last argument passed swiftly into his thoughts, and conjured up the realisation of all his hopes and fancies. But it was gone in a minute, and he sturdily rejoined that the gentleman must look out for somebody else, as he did think he might have done at first.

"He has no right to think that I'd be led away to go to him, sir," said Kit, turning round again after half a minute's hammering. "Does he think I'm a fool?"

"He may, perhaps, Christopher, if you refuse his offer," said Mr. Garland gravely.

"Then let him, sir," retorted Kit. "What do I care, sir, what he thinks? Why should I care for his thinking, sir, when I know that I should be a fool, and worse than a fool, sir, to leave the kindest master and mistress that ever was or can be, who took me out of the streets a very poor and hungry lad indeed—poorer and hungrier, perhaps, than ever you think for, sir—to go to him or anybody? If Miss Nell was to come back, ma'am," added Kit, turning suddenly to his mistress, "why that would be another thing, and perhaps, if *she* wanted me, I might ask you now and then to let me work for her when all was done at home. But when she comes back, I see now that she'll be rich as old master always said she would, and being a rich young lady, what could she want of me? No, no," added Kit, shaking his head sorrowfully, "she'll never want me any more, and bless her, I hope she never may, though I *should* like to see her too!"

Here Kit drove a nail into the wall very hard—much harder than was necessary—and having done so, faced about again.

"There's the pony, sir," said Kit,—"*Whisker*, ma'am (and he knows so well I'm talking about him that he begins to neigh directly, sir),—would he let anybody come near him but me, ma'am? Here's the garden, sir, and Mr. Abel, ma'am. Would Mr. Abel part with me, sir, or is there anybody that could be fonder of the garden, ma'am? It would break mother's heart, sir, and even little Jacob would have sense enough to cry his eyes out, ma'am, if he thought that Mr. Abel could wish to part with me so soon, after having told me, only the other day, that he hoped we might be together for years to come—"

There is no telling how long Kit might have stood upon the ladder, addressing his master and mistress by turns, and generally turning towards the wrong person, if Barbara had not at that moment come running up to say that a messenger from the office had brought a note, which, with an expression of some surprise at

Kit's oratorical appearance, she put into her master's hand.

"Oh!" said the old gentleman after reading it, "ask the messenger to walk this way." Barbara tripping off to do as she was bid, he turned to Kit, and said that they would not pursue the subject any further, and that Kit could not be more unwilling to part with them than they would be to part with Kit; a sentiment which the old lady very generously echoed.

"At the same time, Christopher," added Mr. Garland, glancing at the note in his hand, "if the gentleman should want to borrow you now and then for an hour or so, or even a day or so, at a time, we must consent to lend you, and you must consent to be lent.—Oh! here is the young gentleman. How do you do, sir?"

This salutation was addressed to Mr. Chuckster, who, with his hat extremely on one side, and his hair a long way beyond it, came swaggering up the walk.

"Hope I see you well, sir," returned that gentleman. "Hope I see *you* well, ma'am. Charming box this, sir. Delicious country to be sure."

"You want to take Kit back with you, I find?" observed Mr. Garland.

"I've got a chariot-cab waiting on purpose," replied the clerk. "A very spanking grey in that cab, sir, if you're a judge of horse-flesh."

Declining to inspect the spanking grey, on the plea that he was but poorly acquainted with such matters, and would but imperfectly appreciate his beauties, Mr. Garland invited Mr. Chuckster to partake of a slight repast in the way of lunch. That gentleman readily consenting, certain cold viands, flanked with ale and wine, were speedily prepared for his refreshment. At this repast Mr. Chuckster exerted his utmost abilities to enchant his entertainers, and impress them with a conviction of the mental superiority of those who dwelt in town; with which view he led the discourse to the small scandal of the day, in which he was justly considered by his friends to shine prodigiously. Thus, he was in a condition to relate the exact circumstances of the difference between the Marquis of Mizzler and Lord Bobby, which it appeared originated in a disputed bottle of champagne, and not in a pigeon-pie, as erroneously reported in the newspapers; neither had Lord Bobby said to the Marquis of Mizzler, "Mizzler, one of us two tells a lie, and I'm not the man," as incorrectly stated by the same authorities; but, "Mizzler, you know where I'm to be found, and, damme, sir, find me if you want me"—which, of course, entirely changed the aspect of this interesting question, and placed



it in a very different light. He also acquainted them with the precise amount of the income guaranteed by the Duke of Thigsberry to Violetta Stetta of the Italian Opera, which it appeared was payable quarterly, and not half-yearly, as the public had been given to understand, and which was exclusive, and not inclusive, (as had been monstrously stated,) of jewellery, perfumery, hair powder for five footmen, and two daily changes of kid gloves for a page. Having entreated the old lady and gentleman to set their minds at rest on these absorbing points, for they might rely on his statement being the correct one, Mr. Chuckster entertained them with theatrical chit-chat and the court circular; and so wound up a brilliant and fascinating conversation which he had maintained alone, and without any assistance whatever, for upwards of three-quarters of an hour.

"And now that the nag has got his wind again," said Mr. Chuckster, rising in a graceful manner, "I'm afraid I must cut my stick."

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Garland offered any opposition to his tearing himself away, (feeling, no doubt, that such a man could ill be spared from his proper sphere of action,) and therefore Mr. Chuckster and Kit were shortly afterwards upon their way to town; Kit being perched upon the box of the cabriolet beside the driver, and Mr. Chuckster seated in solitary state inside, with one of his boots sticking out at each of the front windows.

When they reached the notary's house, Kit followed into the office, and was desired by Mr. Abel to sit down and wait, for the gentleman who wanted him had gone out, and perhaps might not return for some time. This anticipation was strictly verified, for Kit had had his dinner, and his tea, and had read all the lighter matter in the Law-List and the Post-Office Directory, and had fallen asleep a great many times, before the gentleman whom he had seen before came in; which he did at last in a very great hurry.

He was closeted with Mr. Witherden for some little time, and Mr. Abel had been called in to assist at the conference, before Kit, wondering very much what he was wanted for, was summoned to attend them.

"Christopher," said the gentleman, turning to him directly he entered the room, "I have found your old master and young mistress."

"No, sir! Have you, though?" returned Kit, his eyes sparkling with delight. "Where are they, sir? How are they, sir? Are they—are they near here?"

"A long way from here," returned the gentle-

man, shaking his head. "But I am going away to-night to bring them back, and I want you to go with me."

"Me, sir?" cried Kit, full of joy and surprise.

"The place," said the strange gentleman, turning thoughtfully to the notary, "indicated by this man of the dogs, is—how far from here—sixty miles?"

"From sixty to seventy."

"Humph! If we travel post all night, we shall reach there in good time to-morrow morning. Now, the only question is, as they will not know me, and the child, God bless her, would think that any stranger pursuing them had a design upon her grandfather's liberty,—can I do better than take this lad, whom they both know and will readily remember, as an assurance to them of my friendly intentions?"

"Certainly not," replied the notary. "Take Christopher by all means."

"I beg your pardon, sir," said Kit, who had listened to this discourse with a lengthening countenance, "but, if that's the reason, I'm afraid I should do more harm than good. Miss Nell, sir, *she* knows me, and would trust in me, I am sure; but old master—I don't know why, gentlemen; nobody does—would not bear me in his sight after he had been ill, and Miss Nell herself told me that I must not go near him, or let him see me any more. I should spoil all that you were doing if I went, I'm afraid. I'd give the world to go, but you had better not take me, sir."

"Another difficulty!" cried the impetuous gentleman. "Was ever man so beset as I? Is there nobody else that knew them, nobody else in whom they had any confidence? Solitary as their lives were, is there no one person who would serve my purpose?"

"Is there, Christopher?" said the notary.

"Not one, sir," replied Kit. "Yes, though—there's my mother."

"Did they know her?" said the single gentleman.

"Know her, sir! Why, she was always coming backwards and forwards. They were as kind to her as they were to me. Bless you, sir, she expected they'd come back to her house."

"Then where the devil is the woman?" said the impatient gentleman, catching up his hat. "Why isn't she here? Why is that woman always out of the way when she is most wanted?"

In a word, the single gentleman was bursting out of the office, bent upon laying violent hands on Kit's mother, forcing her into a post-chaise, and carrying her off, when this novel kind of abduction was with some difficulty prevented

by the joint efforts of Mr. Abel and the notary, who restrained him by dint of their remonstrances, and persuaded him to sound Kit upon the probability of her being able and willing to undertake such a journey on so short a notice.

This occasioned some doubts on the part of Kit, and some violent demonstrations on that of the single gentleman, and a great many soothing speeches on that of the notary and Mr. Abel. The upshot of the business was, that Kit, after weighing the matter in his mind and considering it carefully, promised, on behalf of his mother, that she should be ready within two hours from that time to undertake the expedition, and engaged to produce her in that place, in all respects equipped and prepared for the journey, before the specified period had expired.

Having given this pledge, which was rather a bold one, and not particularly easy of redemption, Kit lost no time in sallying forth and taking measures for its immediate fulfilment.

#### CHAPTER XLI.

**K**IT made his way through the crowded streets, dividing the stream of people, dashing across the busy roadways, diving into lanes and alleys, and stopping or turning aside for nothing, until he came in front of the Old Curiosity Shop, when he came to a stand; partly from habit, and partly from being out of breath.

It was a gloomy autumn evening, and he thought the old place had never looked so dismal as in its dreary twilight. The windows broken, the rusty sashes rattling in their frames, the deserted house a dull barrier dividing the glaring lights and bustle of the street into two long lines, and standing in the midst cold, dark, and empty,—presented a cheerless spectacle which mingled harshly with the bright prospects the boy had been building up for its late inmates, and came like a disappointment or misfortune. Kit would have had a good fire roaring up the empty chimneys, lights sparkling and shining through the windows, people moving briskly to and fro, voices in cheerful conversation, something in unison with the new hopes that were astir. He had not expected that the house would wear any different aspect—had known, indeed, that it could not—but coming upon it in the midst of eager thoughts and expectations, it checked the current in its flow, and darkened it with a mournful shadow.

Kit, however, fortunately for himself, was not learned enough or contemplative enough to be troubled with presages of evil afar off, and, having no mental spectacles to assist his vision in this respect, saw nothing but the dull house, which jarred uncomfortably upon his previous thoughts. So, almost wishing that he had not passed it, though hardly knowing why, he hurried on again, making up by his increased speed for the few moments he had lost.

“Now, if she should be out,” thought Kit as he approached the poor dwelling of his mother, “and I not able to find her, this impatient gentleman would be in a pretty taking. And sure enough there’s no light, and the door’s fast. Now, God forgive me for saying so, but if this is Little Bethel’s doing, I wish Little Bethel was—was farther off,” said Kit, checking himself, and knocking at the door.

A second knock brought no reply from within the house; but caused a woman over the way to look out and inquire who that was a wanting Mrs. Nubbles.

“Me,” said Kit. “She’s at—at Little Bethel, I suppose?”—getting out the name of the obnoxious conventicle with some reluctance, and laying a spiteful emphasis upon the words.

The neighbour nodded assent.

“Then pray tell me where it is,” said Kit, “for I have come on a pressing matter, and must fetch her out, even if she was in the pulpit.”

It was not very easy to procure a direction to the fold in question, as none of the neighbours were of the flock that resorted thither, and few knew anything more of it than the name. At last, a gossip of Mrs. Nubbles’s, who had accompanied her to chapel on one or two occasions when a comfortable cup of tea had preceded her devotions, furnished the needful information, which Kit had no sooner obtained than he started off again.

Little Bethel might have been nearer, and might have been in a straighter road, though in that case the reverend gentleman who presided over its congregation would have lost his favourite allusion to the crooked ways by which it was approached, and which enabled him to liken it to Paradise itself, in contradistinction to the parish church and the broad thoroughfare leading thereunto. Kit found it, at last, after some trouble, and pausing at the door to take breath that he might enter with becoming decency, passed into the chapel.

It was not badly named in one respect, being in truth a particularly little Bethel—a Bethel of the smallest dimensions—with a small number



of small pews, and a small pulpit, in which a small gentleman (by trade a Shoemaker, and by calling a Divine) was delivering, in a by no means small voice, a by no means small sermon, judging of its dimensions by the condition of his audience, which, if their gross amount were but small, comprised a still smaller number of hearers, as the majority were slumbering.

Among these was Kit's mother, who, finding it matter of extreme difficulty to keep her eyes open after the fatigues of last night, and feeling their inclination to close strongly backed and seconded by the arguments of the preacher, had yielded to the drowsiness that overpowered her, and fallen asleep; though not so soundly but that she could, from time to time, utter a slight and almost inaudible groan, as if in recognition of the orator's doctrines. The baby in her arms was as fast asleep as she; and little Jacob, whose youth prevented him from recognising in this prolonged spiritual nourishment anything half as interesting as oysters, was alternately very fast asleep and very wide awake, as his inclination to slumber, or his terror of being personally alluded to in the discourse, gained the mastery over him.

"And now I'm here," thought Kit, gliding into the nearest empty pew which was opposite his mother's, and on the other side of the little aisle, "how am I ever to get at her, or persuade her to come out? I might as well be twenty miles off. She'll never wake till it's all over, and there goes the clock again! If he would but leave off for a minute, or if they'd only sing!"

But there was little encouragement to believe that either event would happen for a couple of hours to come. The preacher went on telling them what he meant to convince them of before he had done, and it was clear that if he only kept to one-half of his promises and forgot the other, he was good for that time at least.

In his desperation and restlessness Kit cast his eyes about the chapel, and, happening to let them fall upon a little seat in front of the clerk's desk, could scarcely believe them when they showed him—Quilp!

He rubbed them twice or thrice, but still they insisted that Quilp was there, and there indeed he was, sitting with his hands upon his knees, and his hat between them, on a little wooden bracket, with the accustomed grin on his dirty face, and his eyes fixed upon the ceiling. He certainly did not glance at Kit or at his mother, and appeared utterly unconscious of their presence; still Kit could not help feeling, directly, that the attention of the sly little fiend was fastened upon them, and upon nothing else.

But, astounded as he was by the apparition of the dwarf among the Little Bethelites, and not free from a misgiving that it was the forerunner of some trouble or annoyance, he was compelled to subdue his wonder, and to take active measures for the withdrawal of his parent, as the evening was now creeping on, and the matter grew serious. Therefore, the next time little Jacob woke, Kit set himself to attract his wandering attention, and this not being a very difficult task (one sneeze effected it), he signed to him to rouse his mother.

Ill-luck would have it, however, that, just then, the preacher, in a forcible exposition of one head of his discourse, leaned over upon the pulpit-desk, so that very little more of him than his legs remained inside: and, while he made vehement gestures with his right hand, and held on with his left, stared, or seemed to stare, straight into little Jacob's eyes, threatening him by his strained look and attitude—so it appeared to the child—that if he so much as moved a muscle, he, the preacher, would be literally, and not figuratively, "down upon him" that instant. In this fearful state of things, distracted by the sudden appearance of Kit, and fascinated by the eyes of the preacher, the miserable Jacob sat bolt upright, wholly incapable of motion, strongly disposed to cry, but afraid to do so, and returning his pastor's gaze until his infant eyes seemed starting from their sockets.

"If I must do it openly I must," thought Kit. With that he walked softly out of his pew and into his mother's, and, as Mr. Swiveller would have observed if he had been present, "collared" the baby without speaking a word.

"Hush, mother!" whispered Kit. "Come along with me. I've got something to tell you."

"Where am I?" said Mrs. Nubbles.

"In this blessed Little Bethel," returned her son peevishly.

"Blessed indeed!" cried Mrs. Nubbles, catching at the word. "Oh, Christopher, how have I been edified this night!"

"Yes, yes, I know," said Kit hastily; "but come along, mother, everybody's looking at us. Don't make a noise—bring Jacob—that's right!"

"Stay, Satan, stay!" cried the preacher as Kit was moving off.

"The gentleman says you're to stay, Christopher," whispered his mother.

"Stay, Satan, stay!" roared the preacher again. "Tempt not the woman that doth incline her ear to thee, but hearken to the voice of him that calleth. He hath a lamb from the fold!" cried the preacher, raising his voice still higher, and pointing to the baby. "He beareth

off a lamb, a precious lamb ! He goeth about, like a wolf in the night season, and inveigleth the tender lambs !”

Kit was the best-tempered fellow in the world, but considering this strong language, and being somewhat excited by the circumstances in which he was placed, he faced round to the pulpit with the baby in his arms, and replied aloud :

“ No, I don't. He's my brother.”

“ He's *my* brother !” cried the preacher.

“ He isn't,” said Kit indignantly. “ How can you say such a thing ?—And don't call me names, if you please ; what harm have I done ? I shouldn't have come to take 'em away, unless I was obliged, you may depend upon that. I wanted to do it very quiet, but you wouldn't let me. Now, you have the goodness to abuse Satan and them as much as you like, sir, and to let me alone, if you please.”

So saying, Kit marched out of the chapel, followed by his mother and little Jacob, and found himself in the open air, with an indistinct recollection of having seen the people wake up and look surprised, and of Quilp having remained, throughout the interruption, in his old attitude, without moving his eyes from the ceiling, or appearing to take the smallest notice of anything that passed.

“ Oh, Kit !” said his mother, with her handkerchief to her eyes, “ what have you done ? I never can go there again—never !”

“ I'm glad of it, mother. What was there in the little bit of pleasure you took last night that made it necessary for you to be low-spirited and sorrowful to-night ? That's the way you do. If you're happy or merry ever, you come here to say, along with that chap, that you're sorry for it. More shame for you, mother, I was going to say.”

“ Hush, dear !” said Mrs. Nubbles ; “ you don't mean what you say, I know, but you're talking sinfulness.”

“ Don't mean it ? But I do mean it !” retorted Kit. “ I don't believe, mother, that harmless cheerfulness and good-humour are thought greater sins in Heaven than shirt-collars are, and I do believe that those chaps are just about as right and sensible in putting down the one as in leaving off the other—that's my belief. But I won't say anything more about it, if you'll promise not to cry, that's all ; and you take the baby that's a lighter weight, and give me little Jacob ; and as we go along (which we must do pretty quick) I'll tell you the news I bring, which will surprise you a little, I can tell you. There—that's right. Now you look as if you'd never seen Little Bethel in all your life, as I hope you

never will again ; and here's the baby ; and little Jacob, you get atop of my back, and catch hold of me tight round the neck, and, whenever a Little Bethel parson calls you a precious lamb, or says your brother's one, you tell him it's the truest thing he's said for a twelvemonth, and that if he'd got a little more of the lamb himself, and less of the mint sauce—not being quite so sharp and sour over it—I should like him all the better. That's what you've got to say to *him*, Jacob !”

Talking on in this way, half in jest and half in earnest, and cheering up his mother, the children, and himself, by the one simple process of determining to be in a good humour, Kit led them briskly forward ; and, on the road home, he related what had passed at the notary's house, and the purpose with which he had intruded on the solemnities of Little Bethel.

His mother was not a little startled on learning what service was required of her, and presently fell into a confusion of ideas, of which the most prominent were that it was a great honour and dignity to ride in a post-chaise, and that it was a moral impossibility to leave the children behind. But this objection, and a great many others, founded on certain articles of dress being at the wash, and certain other articles having no existence in the wardrobe of Mrs. Nubbles, were overcome by Kit, who opposed to each and every of them the pleasure of recovering Nell, and the delight it would be to bring her back in triumph.

“ There's only ten minutes now, mother,” said Kit when they reached home. “ There's a bandbox. Throw in what you want, and we'll be off directly.”

To tell how Kit then hustled into the box all sorts of things which could, by no remote contingency, be wanted, and how he left out everything likely to be of the smallest use ; how a neighbour was persuaded to come and stop with the children, and how the children at first cried dismally, and then laughed heartily on being promised all kinds of impossible and unheard-of toys ; how Kit's mother wouldn't leave off kissing them, and how Kit couldn't make up his mind to be vexed with her for doing it ; would take more time and room than you and I can spare. So, passing over all such matters, it is sufficient to say that within a few minutes after the two hours had expired, Kit and his mother arrived at the notary's door, where a post-chaise was already waiting.

“ With four horses, I declare !” said Kit, quite aghast at the preparations. “ Well, you *are* going to do it, mother ! Here she is, sir. Here's my mother. She's quite ready, sir.”



"That's well," returned the gentleman. "Now, don't be in a flutter, ma'am; you'll be taken great care of. Where's the box with the new clothing and necessaries for them?"

"Here it is," said the notary. "In with it, Christopher."

"All right, sir," replied Kit. "Quite ready now, sir."

"Then come along," said the single gentleman. And thereupon he gave his arm to Kit's mother, handed her into the carriage as politely as you please, and took his seat beside her.

Up went the steps, bang went the door, round whirled the wheels, and off they rattled, with Kit's mother hanging out at one window waving a damp pocket-handkerchief, and screaming out a great many messages to little Jacob and the baby, of which nobody heard a word.

Kit stood in the middle of the road, and looked after them with tears in his eyes—not brought there by the departure he witnessed, but by the return to which he looked forward. "They went away," he thought, "on foot, with nobody to speak to them or say a kind word at parting, and they'll come back, drawn by four horses, with this rich gentleman for their friend, and all their troubles over! She'll forget that she taught me to write——"

Whatever Kit thought about, after this, took some time to think of, for he stood gazing up the lines of shining lamps, long after the chaise had disappeared, and did not return into the house until the notary and Mr. Abel, who had themselves lingered outside till the sound of the wheels was no longer distinguishable, had several times wondered what could possibly detain him.

## CHAPTER XLII.



**I**T behoves us to leave Kit for awhile, thoughtful and expectant, and to follow the fortunes of little Nell; resuming the thread of the narrative at the point where it was left, some chapters back.

In one of those wanderings in the evening-time, when, following the two sisters at a humble distance, she felt, in her sympathy with them and her recognition in their trials of something akin to her own loneliness of spirit, a comfort and consolation which made such moments a time of deep delight, though the softened pleasure they yielded was of that kind which lives and dies in tears—in one of those wanderings at the quiet hour of twilight,

when sky, and earth, and air, and rippling water, and sound of distant bells, claimed kindred with the emotions of the solitary child, and inspired her with soothing thoughts, but not of a child's world or its easy joys—in one of those rambles which had now become her only pleasure or relief from care, light had faded into darkness and evening deepened into night, and still the young creature lingered in the gloom; feeling a companionship in Nature so serene and still, when noise of tongues and glare of garish lights would have been solitude indeed.

The sisters had gone home, and she was alone. She raised her eyes to the bright stars, looking down so mildly from the wide worlds of air, and, gazing on them, found new stars burst upon her view, and more beyond, and more beyond again, until the whole great expanse sparkled with shining spheres, rising higher and higher in immeasurable space, eternal in their numbers as in their changeless and incorruptible existence. She bent over the calm river, and saw them shining in the same majestic order as when the dove beheld them gleaming through the swollen waters, upon the mountain-tops down far below, and dead mankind, a million fathoms deep.

The child sat silently beneath a tree, hushed in her very breath by the stillness of the night, and all its attendant wonders. The time and place awoke reflection, and she thought with a quiet hope—less hope, perhaps, than resignation—on the past, and present, and what was yet before her. Between the old man and herself there had come a gradual separation, harder to bear than any former sorrow. Every evening, and often in the daytime too, he was absent, alone; and although she well knew where he went, and why—too well from the constant drain upon her scanty purse and from his haggard looks—he evaded all inquiry, maintained a strict reserve, and even shunned her presence.

She sat meditating sorrowfully upon this change, and mingling it, as it were, with everything about her, when the distant church-clock bell struck nine. Rising at the sound, she retraced her step, and turned thoughtfully towards the town.

She had gained a little wooden bridge, which, thrown across the stream, led into a meadow in her way, when she came suddenly upon a ruddy light, and looking forward more attentively, discerned that it proceeded from what appeared to be an encampment of gipsies, who had made a fire in one corner at no great distance from the path, and were sitting or lying round it. As she was too poor to have any fear of them, she did not alter her course, (which, indeed, she

could not have done without going a long way round,) but quickened her pace a little, and kept straight on.

A movement of timid curiosity impelled her, when she approached the spot, to glance towards the fire. There was a form between it and her, the outline strongly developed against the light, which caused her to stop abruptly. Then, as if she had reasoned with herself, and were assured that it could not be, or had satisfied herself that it was not, that of the person she had supposed, she went on again.

But at that instant the conversation, whatever it was, which had been carried on near this fire was resumed, and the tones of the voice that spoke—she could not distinguish words—sounded as familiar to her as her own.

She turned, and looked back. The person had been seated before, but was now in a standing posture, and leaning forward on a stick on which he rested both hands. The attitude was no less familiar to her than the tone of voice had been. It was her grandfather.

Her first impulse was to call to him; her next to wonder who his associates could be, and for what purpose they were together. Some vague apprehension succeeded, and, yielding to the strong inclination it awakened, she drew nearer to the place; not advancing across the open field, however, but creeping towards it by the hedge.

In this way she advanced within a few feet of the fire, and standing among a few young trees, could both see and hear, without much danger of being observed.

There were no women or children, as she had seen in other gipsy camps they had passed in their wayfaring, and but one gipsy—a tall athletic man, who stood with his arms folded, leaning against a tree at a little distance off, looking now at the fire, and now, under his black eyelashes, at three other men who were there, with a watchful but half-concealed interest in their conversation. Of these, her grandfather was one; the others she recognised as the first card-players at the public-house on the eventful night of the storm—the man whom they had called Isaac List, and his gruff companion. One of the low, arched gipsy tents, common to that people, was pitched hard by, but it either was, or appeared to be, empty.

“Well, are you going?” said the stout man, looking up from the ground where he was lying at his ease, into her grandfather’s face. “You were in a mighty hurry a minute ago. Go, if you like. You’re your own master, I hope?”

“Don’t vex him,” returned Isaac List, who was squatting like a frog on the other side of

the fire, and had so screwed himself up that he seemed to be squinting all over: “he didn’t mean any offence.”

“You keep me poor, and plunder me, and make a sport and jest of me besides,” said the old man, turning from one to the other. “Ye’ll drive me mad among ye.”

The utter irresolution and feebleness of the grey-haired child, contrasted with the keen and cunning looks of those in whose hands he was, smote upon the little listener’s heart. But she constrained herself to attend to all that passed, and to note each look and word.

“Confound you, what do you mean?” said the stout man, rising a little, and supporting himself on his elbow. “Keep *you* poor! You’d keep us poor if you could, wouldn’t you? That’s the way with you whining, puny, pitiful players. When you lose, you’re martyrs; but I don’t find that when you win, you look upon the other losers in that light. As to plunder!” cried the fellow, raising his voice—“damme, what do you mean by such ungentlemanly language as plunder, eh?”

The speaker laid himself down again at full length, and gave one or two short, angry kicks, as if in further expression of his unbounded indignation. It was quite plain that he acted the bully, and his friend the peacemaker, for some particular purpose; or rather, it would have been to any one but the weak old man; for they exchanged glances quite openly, both with each other and with the gipsy, who grinned his approval of the jest until his white teeth shone again.

The old man stood helplessly among them for a little time, and then said, turning to his assailant:

“You yourself were speaking of plunder just now, you know. Don’t be so violent with me. You were, were you not?”

“Not of plundering among present company. Honour among—among gentlemen, sir,” returned the other, who seemed to have been very near giving an awkward termination to the sentence.

“Don’t be hard upon him, Jowl,” said Isaac List. “He’s very sorry for giving offence. There—go on with what you were saying—go on.”

“I’m a jolly old tender-hearted lamb, I am,” cried Mr. Jowl, “to be sitting here at my time of life giving advice, when I know it won’t be taken, and that I shall get nothing but abuse for my pains. But that’s the way I’ve gone through life. Experience has never put a chill upon my warm-heartedness.”

“I tell you he’s very sorry, don’t I?” re-



monstrated Isaac List, "and that he wishes you'd go on."

"Does he wish it?" said the other.

"Ay," groaned the old man, sitting down, and rocking himself to and fro. "Go on, go on. It's in vain to fight with it; I can't do it; go on."

"I go on, then," said Jowl, "where I left off, when you got up so quick. If you're persuaded that it's time for luck to turn, as it certainly is, and find that you haven't means enough to try it, (and that's where it is, for you know, yourself, that you never have the funds to keep on long enough at a sitting,) help yourself to what seems put in your way on purpose. Borrow it, I say, and, when you're able, pay it back again."

"Certainly," Isaac List struck in, "if this good lady as keeps the wax-works has money, and does keep it in a tin box when she goes to bed, and doesn't lock her door for fear of fire, it seems a easy thing; quite a Providence, *J* should call it—but then I've been religiously brought up."

"You see, Isaac," said his friend, growing more eager, and drawing himself closer to the old man, while he signed to the gipsy not to come between them; "you see, Isaac, strangers are going in and out, every hour of the day; nothing would be more likely than for one of these strangers to get under the good lady's bed, or lock himself in the cupboard; suspicion would be very wide, and would fall a long way from the mark, no doubt. I'd give him his revenge to the last farthing he brought, whatever the amount was."

"But could you?" urged Isaac List. "Is your bank strong enough?"

"Strong enough!" answered the other with assumed disdain. "Here, you sir, give me that box out of the straw!"

This was addressed to the gipsy, who crawled into the low tent on all fours, and after some rummaging and rustling returned with a cash-box, which the man who had spoken opened with a key he wore about his person.

"Do you see this?" he said, gathering up the money in his hand, and letting it drop back into the box, between his fingers, like water. "Do you hear it? Do you know the sound of gold? There, put it back—and don't talk about banks again, Isaac, till you've got one of your own."

Isaac List, with great apparent humility, protested that he had never doubted the credit of a gentleman so notorious for his honourable dealing as Mr. Jowl, and that he had hinted at the production of the box, not for the satisfaction of his doubts, for he could have none, but with a view

to being regaled with a sight of so much wealth, which, though it might be deemed by some but an unsubstantial and visionary pleasure, was to one in his circumstances a source of extreme delight, only to be surpassed by its safe depository in his own personal pockets. Although Mr. List and Mr. Jowl addressed themselves to each other, it was remarkable that they both looked narrowly at the old man, who, with his eyes fixed upon the fire, sat brooding over it, yet listening eagerly—as it seemed, from a certain involuntary motion of the head, or twitching of the face from time to time—to all they said.

"My advice," said Jowl, lying down again, with a careless air, "is plain—I have given it, in fact. I act as a friend. Why should I help a man to the means perhaps of winning all I have, unless I considered him my friend? It's foolish, I dare say, to be so thoughtful of the welfare of other people, but that's my constitution, and I can't help it; so don't blame me, Isaac List."

"I blame you!" returned the person addressed; "not for the world, Mr. Jowl. I wish I could afford to be as liberal as you; and, as you say, he might pay it back if he won—and if he lost—"

"You're not to take that into consideration at all," said Jowl. "But suppose he did, (and nothing's less likely, from all I know of chances,) why, it's better to lose other people's money than one's own, I hope!"

"Ah!" cried Isaac List rapturously, "the pleasures of winning! The delight of picking up the money—the bright, shining yellow-boys—and sweeping 'em into one's pocket! The deliciousness of having a triumph at last, and thinking that one didn't stop short and turn back, but went half-way to meet it! The— But you're not going, old gentleman?"

"I'll do it," said the old man, who had risen and taken two or three hurried steps away, and now returned as hurriedly. "I'll have it every penny."

"Why, that's brave," cried Isaac, jumping up and slapping him on the shoulder; "and I respect you for having so much young blood left. Ha, ha, ha! Joe Jowl's half sorry he advised you now. We've got the laugh against him. Ha, ha, ha!"

"He gives me my revenge, mind," said the old man, pointing to him eagerly with his shrivelled hand; "mind—he stakes coin against coin, down to the last one in the box, be there many or few. Remember that!"

"I'm witness," returned Isaac. "I'll see fair between you."

"I have passed my word," said Jowl with

feigned reluctance, "and I'll keep it. When does this match come off? I wish it was over. —To-night?"

"I must have the money first," said the old man; "and that I'll have to-morrow——"

"Why not to-night?" urged Jowl.

"It's late now, and I shall be flushed and flurried," said the old man. "It must be softly done. No, to-morrow night."

"Then to-morrow be it," said Jowl. "A drop of comfort here. Luck to the best man! Fill!"

The gipsy produced three tin cups, and filled

them to the brim with brandy. The old man turned aside and muttered to himself before he drank. Her own name struck upon the listener's ear, coupled with some wish so fervent, that he seemed to breathe it in an agony of supplication.

"God be merciful to us!" cried the child within herself, "and help us in this trying hour! What shall I do to save him?"

The remainder of their conversation was carried on in a lower tone of voice, and was sufficiently concise; relating merely to the execution of the project, and the best precautions



"THE OLD MAN STOOD HELPLESSLY AMONG THEM FOR A LITTLE TIME."

for diverting suspicion. The old man then shook hands with his tempters, and withdrew.

They watched his bowed and stooping figure as it retreated slowly, and when he turned his head to look back, which he often did, waved their hands, or shouted some brief encouragement. It was not until they had seen him gradually diminish into a mere speck upon the distant road, that they turned to each other, and ventured to laugh aloud.

"So," said Jowl, warming his hands at the fire, "it's done at last. He wanted more persuading than I expected. It's three weeks ago

since we first put this in his head. What'll he bring, do you think?"

"Whatever he brings, it's halved between us," returned Isaac List.

The other man nodded. "We must make quick work of it," he said, "and then cut his acquaintance, or we may be suspected. Sharp's the word."

List and the gipsy acquiesced. When they had all three amused themselves a little with their victim's infatuation, they dismissed the subject as one which had been sufficiently discussed, and began to talk in a jargon which the



child did not understand. As their discourse appeared to relate to matters in which they were warmly interested, however, she deemed it the best time for escaping unobserved: and crept away with slow and cautious steps, keeping in the shadow of the hedges, or forcing a path through them or the dry ditches, until she could emerge upon the road at a point beyond their range of vision. Then she fled homewards as quickly as she could, torn and bleeding from the wounds of thorns and briars, but more lacerated in mind, and threw herself upon her bed, distracted.

The first idea that flashed upon her mind was flight, instant flight; dragging him from that place, and rather dying of want upon the roadside than ever exposing him again to such terrible temptations. Then, she remembered that the crime was not to be committed until next night, and there was the intermediate time for thinking, and resolving what to do. Then, she was distracted with a horrible fear that he might be committing it at that moment; with a dread of hearing shrieks and cries piercing the silence of the night; with fearful thoughts of what he might be tempted and led on to do, if he were detected in the act, and had but a woman to struggle with. It was impossible to bear such torture. She stole to the room where the money was, opened the door, and looked in. God be praised! He was not there, and she was sleeping soundly.

She went back to her own room, and tried to prepare herself for bed. But who could sleep—sleep! who could lie passively down, distracted by such terrors? They came upon her more and more strongly yet. Half undressed, and with her hair in wild disorder, she flew to the old man's bedside, clasped him by the wrist, and roused him from his sleep.

"What's this?" he cried, starting up in bed, and fixing his eyes upon her spectral face.

"I have had a dreadful dream," said the child with an energy that nothing but such terrors could have inspired. "A dreadful, horrible dream. I have had it once before. It is a dream of grey-haired men like you, in darkened rooms by night, robbing the sleepers of their gold. Up, up!" The old man shook in every joint, and folded his hands like one who prays.

"Not to me," said the child, "not to me—to Heaven, to save us from such deeds! This dream is too real. I cannot sleep, I cannot stay here, I cannot leave you alone under the roof where such dreams come. Up! We must fly."

He looked at her as if she were a spirit—she

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP, II.

might have been, for all the look of earth she had—and trembled more and more.

"There is no time to lose; I will not lose one minute," said the child. "Up! and away with me!"

"To-night?" murmured the old man.

"Yes, to-night," replied the child. "To-morrow night will be too late. The dream will have come again. Nothing but flight can save us. Up!"

The old man rose from his bed: his forehead bedewed with the cold sweat of fear: and, bending before the child as if she had been an angel messenger sent to lead him where she would, made ready to follow her. She took him by the hand, and led him on. As they passed the door of the room he had proposed to rob, she shuddered and looked up into his face. What a white face was that, and with what a look did he meet hers!

She took him to her own chamber, and, still holding him by the hand as if she feared to lose him for an instant, gathered together the little stock she had, and hung her basket on her arm. The old man took his wallet from her hands, and strapped it on his shoulders—his staff, too, she had brought away—and then she led him forth.

Through the strait streets, and narrow crooked outskirts, their trembling feet passed quickly. Up the steep hill too, crowned by the old grey castle, they toiled with rapid steps, and had not once looked behind.

But, as they drew nearer the ruined walls, the moon rose in all her gentle glory, and, from their venerable age, garlanded with ivy, moss, and waving grass, the child looked back upon the sleeping town, deep in the valley's shade: and on the far-off river with its winding track of light: and on the distant hills; and as she did so, she clasped the hand she held less firmly, and bursting into tears, fell upon the old man's neck.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

HER momentary weakness past, the child again summoned the resolution which had until now sustained her, and, endeavouring to keep steadily in her view the one idea that they were flying from disgrace and crime, and that her grandfather's preservation must depend solely on her firmness, unaided by one word of advice or any helping hand, urged him onward, and looked back no more.

While he, subdued and abashed, seemed to crouch before her, and to shrink and cower down, as if in the presence of some superior creature, the child herself was sensible of a new feeling within her, which elevated her nature, and inspired her with an energy and confidence she had never known. There was no divided responsibility now; the whole burden of their two lives had fallen upon her, and henceforth she must think and act for both. "I have saved him," she thought. "In all dangers and distresses, I will remember that."

At any other time, the recollection of having deserted the friend who had shown them so much homely kindness without a word of justification—the thought that they were guilty, in appearance, of treachery and ingratitude—even the having parted from the two sisters—would have filled her with sorrow and regret. But now, all other considerations were lost in the new uncertainties and anxieties of their wild and wandering life; and the very desperation of their condition roused and stimulated her.

In the pale moonlight, which lent a wanness of its own to the delicate face where thoughtful care already mingled with the winning grace and loveliness of youth, the too bright eye, the spiritual head, the lips that pressed each other with such high resolve and courage of the heart, the slight figure firm in its bearing, and yet so very weak, told their silent tale; but told it only to the wind that rustled by, which, taking up its burden, carried, perhaps to some mother's pillow, faint dreams of childhood fading in its bloom, and resting in the sleep that knows no waking.

The night crept on apace, the moon went down, the stars grew pale and dim, the morning, cold as they, slowly approached. Then, from behind a distant hill, the noble sun rose up, driving the mists in phantom shapes before it, and clearing the earth of their ghostly forms till darkness came again. When it had climbed higher into the sky, and there was warmth in its cheerful beams, they laid them down to sleep upon a bank, hard by some water.

But Nell retained her grasp upon the old man's arm, and, long after he was slumbering soundly, watched him with untiring eyes. Fatigue stole over her at last; her grasp relaxed, tightened, relaxed again, and they slept side by side.

A confused sound of voices, mingling with her dreams, awoke her. A man of very uncouth and rough appearance was standing over them, and two of his companions were looking on, from a long heavy boat which had come close to the bank while they were sleeping. The boat had neither oar nor sail, but was towed by a couple

of horses, who, with the rope to which they were harnessed slack and dripping in the water, were resting on the path.

"Holloa!" said the man roughly. "What's the matter here?"

"We were only asleep, sir," said Nell. "We have been walking all night."

"A pair of queer travellers to be walking all night," observed the man who had first accosted them. "One of you is a trifle too old for that sort of work, and the other a trifle too young. Where are you going?"

Nell faltered, and pointed at hazard towards the West, upon which the man inquired if she meant a certain town which he named. Nell, to avoid more questioning, said, "Yes, that was the place."

"Where have you come from?" was the next question; and this being an easier one to answer, Nell mentioned the name of the village in which their friend the schoolmaster dwelt, as being less likely to be known to the men, or to provoke further inquiry.

"I thought somebody had been robbing and ill-using you, might be," said the man. "That's all. Good day."

Returning his salute, and feeling greatly relieved by his departure, Nell looked after him as he mounted one of the horses, and the boat went on. It had not gone very far, when it stopped again, and she saw the men beckoning to her.

"Did you call to me?" said Nell, running up to them.

"You may go with us if you like," replied one of those in the boat. "We're going to the same place."

The child hesitated for a moment. Thinking, as she had thought with great trepidation more than once before, that the men whom she had seen with her grandfather might, perhaps, in their eagerness for the booty, follow them, and, regaining their influence over him, set hers at nought; and that, if they went with these men, all traces of them must surely be lost at that spot; she determined to accept the offer. The boat came close to the bank again, and, before she had had any more time for consideration, she and her grandfather were on board, and gliding smoothly down the canal.

The sun shone pleasantly on the bright water, which was sometimes shaded by trees, and sometimes open to a wide extent of country, intersected by running streams, and rich with wooded hills, cultivated land, and sheltered farms. Now and then, a village, with its modest spire, thatched roofs, and gable-ends, would



peep out from among the trees ; and, more than once, a distant town, with great church towers looming through its smoke, and high factories or workshops rising above the mass of houses, would come in view, and, by the length of time it lingered in the distance, show them how slowly they travelled. Their way lay, for the most part, through the low grounds and open plains ; and except these distant places, and occasionally some men working in the fields, or lounging on the bridges under which they passed, to see them creep along, nothing encroached on their monotonous and secluded track.

Nell was rather disheartened, when they stopped at a kind of wharf late in the afternoon, to learn from one of the men that they would not reach their place of destination until next day, and that, if she had no provision with her, she had better buy it there. She had but a few pence, having already bargained with them for some bread, but even of these it was necessary to be very careful, as they were on their way to an utterly strange place, with no resource whatever. A small loaf and a morsel of cheese, therefore, were all she could afford, and with these she took her place in the boat again, and after half an hour's delay, during which the men were drinking at the public-house, proceeded on the journey.

They brought some beer and spirits into the boat with them, and what with drinking freely before, and again now, were soon in a fair way of being quarrelsome and intoxicated. Avoiding the small cabin, therefore, which was very dark and filthy, and to which they often invited both her and her grandfather, Nell sat in the open air with the old man by her side : listening to their boisterous hosts with a palpitating heart, and almost wishing herself safe on shore again, though she should have to walk all night.

They were, in truth, very rugged, noisy fellows, and quite brutal among themselves, though civil enough to their two passengers. Thus, when a quarrel arose between the man who was steering and his friend in the cabin, upon the question who had first suggested the propriety of offering Nell some beer, and when the quarrel led to a scuffle in which they beat each other fearfully, to her inexpressible terror, neither visited his displeasure upon her, but each contented himself with venting it on his adversary, on whom, in addition to blows, he bestowed a variety of compliments, which, happily for the child, were conveyed in terms to her quite unintelligible. The difference was finally adjusted by the man who had come out of the cabin knocking the

other into it head first, and taking the helm into his own hands, without evincing the least discomposure himself, or causing any in his friend, who, being of a tolerably strong constitution and perfectly inured to such trifles, went to sleep as he was, with his heels upwards, and in a couple of minutes or so was snoring comfortably.

By this time it was night again, and though the child felt cold, being but poorly clad, her anxious thoughts were far removed from her own suffering or uneasiness, and busily engaged in endeavouring to devise some scheme for their joint subsistence. The same spirit which had supported her on the previous night, upheld and sustained her now. Her grandfather lay sleeping safely at her side, and the crime to which his madness urged him was not committed. That was her comfort.

How every circumstance of her short, eventful life came thronging into her mind as they travelled on ! Slight incidents, never thought of or remembered until now ; faces seen once, and ever since forgotten ; words, scarcely heeded at the time ; scenes, of a year ago and those of yesterday, mixing up and linking themselves together ; familiar places shaping themselves out in the darkness from things which, when approached, were, of all others, the most remote and most unlike them ; sometimes, a strange confusion in her mind relative to the occasion of her being there, and the place to which she was going, and the people she was with ; and imagination suggesting remarks and questions which sounded so plainly in her ears, that she would start, and turn, and be almost tempted to reply ;—all the fancies and contradictions common in watching and excitement, and restless change of place, beset the child.

She happened, while she was thus engaged, to encounter the face of the man on deck, in whom the sentimental stage of drunkenness had now succeeded to the boisterous, and who, taking from his mouth a short pipe, quilted over with string, for its longer preservation, requested that she would oblige him with a song.

“ You’ve got a very pretty voice, a very soft eye, and a very strong memory,” said this gentleman ; “ the voice and eye I’ve got evidence for, and the memory’s an opinion of my own. And I’m never wrong. Let me hear a song this minute.”

“ I don’t think I know one, sir,” returned Nell.

“ You know forty-seven songs,” said the man with a gravity which admitted of no alteration on the subject. “ Forty-seven’s your number.

Let me hear one of 'em—the best. Give me a song this minute."

Not knowing what might be the consequences of irritating her friend, and trembling with the fear of doing so, poor Nell sang him some little ditty which she had learned in happier times, and which was so agreeable to his ear, that on its conclusion he in the same peremptory manner requested to be favoured with another, to which he was so obliging as to roar a chorus to no

particular tune, and with no words at all, but which amply made up in its amazing energy for its deficiency in other respects. The noise of this vocal performance awakened the other man, who, staggering upon deck and shaking his late opponent by the hand, swore that singing was his pride and joy and chief delight, and that he desired no better entertainment. With a third call, more imperative than either of the two former, Nell felt obliged to comply, and this



"A MAN OF VERY UNCOUTH AND ROUGH APPEARANCE WAS STANDING OVER THEM."

time a chorus was maintained not only by the two men together, but also by the third man on horseback, who, being by his position debarred from a nearer participation in the revels of the night, roared when his companions roared, and rent the very air. In this way, with little cessation, and singing the same songs again and again, the tired and exhausted child kept them in good-humour all that night; and many a cottager, who was roused from his soundest sleep by the discordant chorus as it floated

away upon the wind, hid his head beneath the bedclothes and trembled at the sounds.

At length the morning dawned. It was no sooner light than it began to rain heavily. As the child could not endure the intolerable vapours of the cabin, they covered her, in return for her exertions, with some pieces of sail-cloth and ends of tarpaulin, which sufficed to keep her tolerably dry, and to shelter her grandfather besides. As the day advanced the rain increased. At noon it poured down more hope-



lessly and heavily than ever, without the faintest promise of abatement.

They had, for some time, been gradually approaching the place for which they were bound. The water had become thicker and dirtier; other barges, coming from it, passed them frequently; the paths of coal-ash and huts of staring brick marked the vicinity of some great manufacturing town; while scattered streets and houses, and smoke from distant furnaces, indicated that they were already in the outskirts. Now, the clustered roofs and piles of buildings, trembling with the working of engines, and dimly resounding with their shrieks and throbbings; the tall chimneys vomiting forth a black vapour, which hung in a dense ill-favoured cloud above the housetops, and filled the air with gloom; the clank of hammers beating upon iron, the roar of busy streets and noisy crowds, gradually augmenting until all the various sounds blended into one, and none was distinguishable for itself, announced the termination of their journey.

The boat floated into the wharf to which it belonged. The men were occupied directly. The child and her grandfather, after waiting in vain to thank them, or ask them whether they should go, passed through a dirty lane into a crowded street, and stood, amid its din and tumult, and in the pouring rain, as strange, bewildered, and confused, as if they had lived a thousand years before, and were raised from the dead and placed there by a miracle.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

**T**HE throng of people hurried by in two opposite streams, with no symptom of cessation or exhaustion; intent upon their own affairs; and undisturbed in their business speculations by the roar of carts and waggons laden with clashing wares, the slipping of horses' feet upon the wet and greasy pavement, the rattling of the rain on windows and umbrella-tops, the jostling of the more impatient passengers, and all the noise and tumult of a crowded street in the high tide of its occupation: while the two poor strangers, stunned and bewildered by the hurry they beheld but had no part in, looked mournfully on; feeling, amidst the crowd, a solitude which has no parallel but in the thirst of the shipwrecked mariner, who, tossed to and fro upon the billows of a mighty ocean, his red eyes blinded by look-

ing on the water which hems him in on every side, has not one drop to cool his burning tongue.

They withdrew into a low archway for shelter from the rain, and watched the faces of those who passed, to find in one among them a ray of encouragement or hope. Some frowned, some smiled, some muttered to themselves, some made slight gestures, as if anticipating the conversation in which they would shortly be engaged, some wore the cunning look of bargaining and plotting, some were anxious and eager, some slow and dull; in some countenances were written gain; in others, loss. It was like being in the confidence of all these people to stand quietly there, looking into their faces as they flitted past. In busy places, where each man has an object of his own, and feels assured that every other man has his, his character and purpose are written broadly in his face. In the public walks and lounges of a town, people go to see and to be seen, and there the same expression, with little variety, is repeated a hundred times. The working-day faces come nearer to the truth, and let it out more plainly.

Falling into that kind of abstraction which such a solitude awakens, the child continued to gaze upon the passing crowd with a wondering interest, amounting almost to a temporary forgetfulness of her own condition. But cold, wet, hunger, want of rest, and lack of any place in which to lay her aching head, soon brought her thoughts back to the point whence they had strayed. No one passed who seemed to notice them, or to whom she durst appeal. After some time, they left their place of refuge from the weather, and mingled with the concourse.

Evening came on. They were still wandering up and down, with fewer people about them, but with the same sense of solitude in their own breasts, and the same indifference from all around. The lights in the streets and shops made them feel yet more desolate, for, with their help, night and darkness seemed to come on faster. Shivering with the cold and damp, ill in body, and sick to death at heart, the child needed her utmost firmness and resolution even to creep along.

Why had they ever come to this noisy town, when there were peaceful country places, in which, at least, they might have hungered and thirsted with less suffering than in its squalid strife? They were but an atom here, in a mountain heap of misery, the very sight of which increased their helplessness and suffering.

The child had not only to endure the accumulated hardships of their destitute condition, but

to bear the reproaches of her grandfather, who began to murmur at having been led away from their late abode, and demand that they should return to it. Being now penniless, and no relief or prospect of relief appearing, they retraced their steps through the deserted streets, and went back to the wharf, hoping to find the boat in which they had come, and to be allowed to sleep on board that night. But here again they were disappointed, for the gate was closed, and some fierce dogs, barking at their approach, obliged them to retreat.

"We must sleep in the open air to-night, dear," said the child in a weak voice, as they turned away from this last repulse; "and to-morrow we will beg our way to some quiet part of the country, and try to earn our bread in very humble work."

"Why did you bring me here?" returned the old man fiercely. "I cannot bear these close eternal streets. We came from a quiet part. Why did you force me to leave it?"

"Because I must have that dream I told you of no more," said the child with a momentary firmness that lost itself in tears; "and we must live among poor people, or it will come again. Dear grandfather, you are old and weak, I know; but look at me. I never will complain if you will not, but I have some suffering indeed."

"Ah! poor, houseless, wandering, motherless child!" cried the old man, clasping his hands, and gazing as if for the first time upon her anxious face, her travel-stained dress, and bruised and swollen feet; "has all my agony of care brought her to this at last? Was I a happy man once, and have I lost happiness and all I had, for this?"

"If we were in the country now," said the child with assumed cheerfulness, as they walked on looking about them for a shelter, "we should find some good old tree, stretching out his green arms as if he loved us, and nodding and rustling as if he would have us fall asleep, thinking of him while he watched. Please God, we shall be there soon—to-morrow or next day at the farthest—and in the meantime let us think, dear, that it was a good thing we came here; for we are lost in the crowd and hurry of this place, and, if any cruel people should pursue us, they could surely never trace us further. There's comfort in that. And here's a deep old doorway—very dark, but quite dry, and warm too, for the wind don't blow in here—What's that?"

Uttering a half-shriek, she recoiled from a black figure which came suddenly out of the

dark recess in which they were about to take refuge, and stood still, looking at them.

"Speak again," it said. "Do I know the voice?"

"No," replied the child timidly; "we are strangers, and, having no money for a night's lodging, were going to rest here."

There was a feeble lamp at no great distance; the only one in the place, which was a kind of square yard, but sufficient to show how poor and mean it was. To this the figure beckoned them; at the same time drawing within its rays, as if to show that it had no desire to conceal itself, or take them at an advantage.

The form was that of a man, miserably clad and begrimed with smoke, which, perhaps by its contrast with the natural colour of his skin, made him look paler than he really was. That he was naturally of a very wan and pallid aspect, however, his hollow cheeks, sharp features, and sunken eyes, no less than a certain look of patient endurance, sufficiently testified. His voice was harsh by nature, but not brutal; and though his face, besides possessing the characteristics already mentioned, was overshadowed by a quantity of long dark hair, its expression was neither ferocious nor bad.

"How came you to think of resting there?" he said. "Or how," he added, looking more attentively at the child, "do you come to want a place of rest at this time of night?"

"Our misfortunes," the grandfather answered, "are the cause."

"Do you know," said the man, looking still more earnestly at Nell, "how wet she is, and that the damp streets are not a place for her?"

"I know it well, God help me!" he replied. "What can I do?"

The man looked at Nell again, and gently touched her garments, from which the rain was running off in little streams. "I can give you warmth," he said after a pause; "nothing else. Such lodging as I have is in that house," pointing to the doorway from which he had emerged, "but she is safer and better there than here. The fire is in a rough place, but you can pass the night beside it safely, if you'll trust yourselves to me. You see that red light yonder?"

They raised their eyes, and saw a lurid glare hanging in the dark sky; the dull reflection of some distant fire.

"It's not far," said the man. "Shall I take you there? You were going to sleep upon cold bricks; I can give you a bed of warm ashes—nothing better."

Without waiting for any farther reply than he



saw in their looks, he took Nell in his arms, and bade the old man follow.

Carrying her as tenderly, and as easily too, as if she had been an infant, and showing himself both swift and sure of foot, he led the way through what appeared to be the poorest and most wretched quarter of the town; not turning aside to avoid the overflowing kennels or running water-spouts, but holding his course, regardless of such obstructions, and making his way straight through them. They had proceeded thus, in silence, for some quarter of an hour, and had lost sight of the glare to which he had pointed, in the dark and narrow ways by which they had come, when it suddenly burst upon them again, streaming up from the high chimney of a building close before them.

"This is the place," he said, pausing at a door to put Nell down and take her hand. "Don't be afraid. There's nobody here will harm you."

It needed a strong confidence in this assurance to induce them to enter, and what they saw inside did not diminish their apprehension and alarm. In a large and lofty building, supported by pillars of iron, with great black apertures in the upper walls, open to the external air; echoing to the roof with the beating of hammers and roar of furnaces, mingled with the hissing of red-hot metal plunged in water, and a hundred strange unearthly noises never heard elsewhere; in this gloomy place, moving like demons among the flame and smoke, dimly and fitfully seen, flushed and tormented by the burning fires, and wielding great weapons, a faulty blow from any one of which must have crushed some workman's skull, a number of men laboured like giants. Others, reposing upon heaps of coals or ashes, with their faces turned to the black vault above, slept or rested from their toil. Others, again, opening the white-hot furnace doors, cast fuel on the flames, which came rushing and roaring forth to meet it, and licked it up like oil. Others drew forth, with clashing noise, upon the ground, great sheets of glowing steel, emitting an insupportable heat, and a dull deep light like that which reddens in the eyes of savage beasts.

Through these bewildering sights and deafening sounds their conductor led them to where, in a dark portion of the building, one furnace burnt by night and day—so, at least, they gathered from the motion of his lips, for as yet they could only see him speak: not hear him. The man who had been watching this fire, and whose task was ended for the present, gladly withdrew, and left them with their friend, who, spreading Nell's little cloak upon a heap of

ashes, and showing her where she could hang her outer clothes to dry, signed to her and the old man to lie down and sleep. For himself, he took his station on a rugged mat before the furnace door, and, resting his chin upon his hands, watched the flame as it shone through the iron chinks, and the white ashes as they fell into their bright hot grave below.

The warmth of her bed, hard and humble as it was, combined with the great fatigue she had undergone, soon caused the tumult of the place to fall with a gentler sound upon the child's tired ears, and was not long in lulling her to sleep. The old man was stretched beside her, and, with her hand upon his neck, she lay and dreamed.

It was yet night when she awoke, nor did she know how long, or for how short a time, she had slept. But she found herself protected, both from any cold air that might find its way into the building, and from the scorching heat, by some of the workmen's clothes; and, glancing at their friend, saw that he sat in exactly the same attitude, looking with a fixed earnestness of attention towards the fire, and keeping so very still that he did not even seem to breathe. She lay in the state between sleeping and waking, looking so long at his motionless figure that at length she almost feared he had died as he sat there; and, softly rising and drawing close to him, ventured to whisper in his ear.

He moved, and glancing from her to the place she had lately occupied, as if to assure himself that it was really the child so near him, looked inquiringly into her face.

"I feared you were ill," she said. "The other men are all in motion, and you are so very quiet."

"They leave me to myself," he replied. "They know my humour. They laugh at me, but don't harm me in it. See yonder there—that's *my* friend."

"The fire?" said the child.

"It has been alive as long as I have," the man made answer. "We talk and think together all night long."

The child glanced quickly at him in her surprise, but he had turned his eyes in their former direction, and was musing as before.

"It's like a book to me," he said—"the only book I ever learned to read; and many an old story it tells me. It's music, for I should know it's voice among a thousand, and there are other voices in its roar. It has its pictures too. You don't know how many strange faces and different scenes I trace in the red-hot coals. It's my memory, that fire, and shows me all my life."

The child, bending down to listen to his words, could not help remarking with what brightened eyes he continued to speak and muse.

"Yes," he said with a faint smile, "it was the same when I was quite a baby, and crawled about it till I fell asleep. My father watched it then."

"Had you no mother?" asked the child.

"No, she was dead. Women work hard in these parts. She worked herself to death, they told me, and, as they said so then, the fire has gone on saying the same thing ever since. I suppose it was true. I have always believed it."

"Were you brought up here, then?" said the child.

"Summer and winter," he replied. "Secretly at first, but, when they found it out, they let him keep me here. So the fire nursed me—the same fire. It has never gone out."

"You are fond of it?" said the child.

"Of course I am. He died before it. I saw him fall down—just there, where those ashes are burning now—and wondered, I remember, why it didn't help him."

"Have you been here ever since?" asked the child.

"Ever since I came to watch it; but there was a while between, and a very cold dreary while it was. It burnt all the time, though, and roared and leaped when I came back, as it used to do in our play days. You may guess, from looking at me, what kind of child I was; but, for all the difference between us, I *was* a child, and, when I saw you in the street to-night, you put me in mind of myself as I was after he died, and made me wish to bring you to the fire. I thought of those old times again, when I saw you sleeping by it. You should be sleeping now. Lie down again, poor child, lie down again!"

With that, he led her to her rude couch, and, covering her with the clothes with which she had found herself enveloped when she woke, returned to his seat, whence he moved no more unless to feed the furnace, but remained motionless as a statue. The child continued to watch him for a little time, but soon yielded to the drowsiness that came upon her, and, in the dark strange place and on the heap of ashes, slept as peacefully as if the room had been a palace chamber, and the bed a bed of down.

When she awoke again, broad day was shining through the lofty openings in the walls, and, stealing in slanting rays but midway down, seemed to make the building darker than it had been at night. The clang and tumult were still going on, and the remorseless fires were burning

fiercely as before; for few changes of night and day brought rest or quiet there.

Her friend parted his breakfast—a scanty mess of coffee and some coarse bread—with the child and her grandfather, and inquired whither they were going. She told him that they sought some distant country place, remote from towns or even other villages, and with a faltering tongue inquired what road they would do best to take.

"I know little of the country," he said, shaking his head, "for such as I pass all our lives before our furnace doors, and seldom go forth to breathe. But there *are* such places yonder."

"And far from here?" said Nell.

"Ay, surely. How could they be near us, and be green and fresh? The road lies, too, through miles and miles, all lighted up by fires like ours—a strange black road, and one that would frighten you by night."

"We are here, and must go on," said the child boldly; for she saw that the old man listened with anxious ears to this account.

"Rough people—paths never made for little feet like yours—a dismal, blighted way—is there no turning back, my child?"

"There is none," cried Nell, pressing forward. "If you can direct us, do. If not, pray do not seek to turn us from our purpose. Indeed you do not know the danger that we shun, and how right and true we are in flying from it, or you would not try to stop us, I am sure you would not."

"God forbid, if it is so!" said their uncouth protector, glancing from the eager child to her grandfather, who hung his head and bent his eyes upon the ground. "I'll direct you from the door the best I can. I wish I could do more."

He showed them, then, by which road they must leave the town, and what course they should hold when they had gained it. He lingered so long on these instructions, that the child, with a fervent blessing, tore herself away, and stayed to hear no more.

But, before they had reached the corner of the lane, the man came running after them, and, pressing her hand, left something in it—two old, battered, smoke-incrusted penny pieces. Who knows but they shone as brightly in the eyes of angels as golden gifts that have been chronicled on tombs?

And thus they separated; the child to lead her sacred charge farther from guilt and shame; and the labourer to attach a fresh interest to the spot where his guests had slept, and read new histories in his furnace fire.



## CHAPTER XLV.

**I**N all their journeying, they had never longed so ardently, they had never so pined and wearied, for the freedom of pure air and open country as now. No, not even on that memorable morning when, deserting their old home, they abandoned themselves to the mercies of a strange world, and left all the dumb and senseless things they had known and loved behind—not even then had they so yearned for the fresh solitudes of wood, hill-side, and field as now, when the noise and dirt and vapour of the great manufacturing town, reeking with lean misery and hungry wretchedness, hemmed them in on every side, and seemed to shut out hope, and render escape impossible.

“Two days and nights!” thought the child. “He said two days and nights we should have to spend among such scenes as these. Oh! if we live to reach the country once again, if we get clear of these dreadful places, though it is only to lie down and die, with what a grateful heart I shall thank God for so much mercy!”

With thoughts like this, and with some vague design of travelling to a great distance among streams and mountains, where only very poor and simple people lived, and where they might maintain themselves by very humble helping work in farms, free from such terrors as that from which they fled, the child, with no resource but the poor man’s gift, and no encouragement but that which flowed from her own heart, and its sense of the truth and right of what she did, nerved herself to this last journey, and boldly pursued her task.

“We shall be very slow to-day, dear,” she said as they toiled painfully through the streets; “my feet are sore, and I have pains in all my limbs from the wet of yesterday. I saw that he looked at us, and thought of that, when he said how long we should be upon the road.”

“It was a dreary way he told us of,” returned her grandfather piteously. “Is there no other road? Will you not let me go some other way than this?”

“Places lie beyond these,” said the child firmly, “where we may live in peace, and be tempted to do no harm. We will take the road that promises to have that end, and we would not turn out of it, if it were a hundred times worse than our fears lead us to expect. We would not dear, would we?”

“No,” replied the old man, wavering in his voice, no less than in his manner. “No. Let

us go on. I am ready. I am quite ready, Nell.”

The child walked with more difficulty than she had led her companion to expect, for the pains that racked her joints were of no common severity, and every exertion increased them. But they wrung from her no complaint, or look of suffering; and, though the two travellers proceeded very slowly, they did proceed. Clearing the town in course of time, they began to feel that they were fairly on their way.

A long suburb of red brick houses,—some with patches of garden ground, where coal-dust and factory smoke darkened the shrinking leaves and coarse rank flowers, and where the struggling vegetation sickened and sank under the hot breath of kiln and furnace, making them by its presence seem yet more blighting and unwholesome than in the town itself,—a long, flat, straggling suburb passed, they came, by slow degrees, upon a cheerless region, where not a blade of grass was seen to grow, where not a bud put forth its promise in the spring, where nothing green could live but on the surface of the stagnant pools, which here and there lay idly sweltering by the black roadside.

Advancing more and more into the shadow of this mournful place, its dark depressing influence stole upon their spirits, and filled them with a dismal gloom. On every side, and far as the eye could see into the heavy distance, tall chimneys, crowding on each other, and presenting that endless repetition of the same dull, ugly form which is the horror of oppressive dreams, poured out their plague of smoke, obscured the light, and made foul the melancholy air. On mounds of ashes by the wayside, sheltered only by a few rough boards, or rotten pent-house roofs, strange engines spun and writhed like tortured creatures: clanking their iron chains, shrieking in their rapid whirl from time to time as though in torment unendurable, and making the ground tremble with their agonies. Dismantled houses here and there appeared, tottering to the earth, propped up by fragments of others that had fallen down, unroofed, windowless, blackened, desolate, but yet inhabited. Men, women, children, wan in their looks and ragged in attire, tended the engines, fed their tributary fires, begged upon the road, or scowled half naked from the doorless houses. Then came more of the wrathful monsters, whose like they almost seemed to be in their wildness and their untamed air, screeching and turning round and round again; and still, before, behind, and to the right and left, was the same interminable perspective of brick towers, never ceasing in

their black vomit, blasting all things living or inanimate, shutting out the face of day, and closing in on all these horrors with a dense dark cloud.

But, night-time in this dreadful spot!—night, when the smoke was changed to fire; when every chimney spouted up its flame; and places, that had been dark vaults all day, now shone red-hot, with figures moving to and fro within their blazing jaws, and calling to one another with hoarse cries—night, when the noise of every strange machine was aggravated by the darkness; when the people near them looked wilder and more savage; when bands of unemployed labourers paraded the roads, or clustered by torch-light round their leaders, who told them, in stern language, of their wrongs, and urged them on to frightful cries and threats; when maddened men, armed with sword and firebrand, spurning the tears and prayers of women who would restrain them, rushed forth on errands of terror and destruction, to work no ruin half so surely as their own—night, when carts came rumbling by, filled with rude coffins (for contagious disease and death had been busy with the living crops); when orphans cried, and distracted women shrieked and followed in their wake—night, when some called for bread, and some for drink to drown their cares, and some with tears, and some with staggering feet, and some with bloodshot eyes, went brooding home—night, which, unlike the night that Heaven sends on earth, brought with it no peace, nor quiet, nor signs of blessed sleep—who shall tell the terrors of the night to the young wandering child?

And yet she lay down, with nothing between her and the sky; and, with no fear for herself, for she was past it now, put up a prayer for the poor old man. So very weak and spent she felt, so very calm and unresisting, that she had no thought of any wants of her own, but prayed that God would raise up some friend for *him*. She tried to recall the way they had come, and to look in the direction where the fire by which they had slept last night was burning. She had forgotten to ask the name of the poor man, their friend, and, when she had remembered him in her prayers, it seemed ungrateful not to turn one look towards the spot where he was watching.

A penny loaf was all they had had that day. It was very little, but even hunger was forgotten in the strange tranquillity that crept over her senses. She lay down very gently, and, with a quiet smile upon her face, fell into a slumber. It was not like sleep—and yet it must have been, or why those pleasant dreams of the little scholar all night long?

Morning came. Much weaker, diminished powers even of sight and hearing, and yet the child made no complaint—perhaps would have made none, even if she had not had that inducement to be silent travelling by her side. She felt a hopelessness of their ever being extricated together from that forlorn place; a dull conviction that she was very ill, perhaps dying; but no fear or anxiety.

A loathing of food, that she was not conscious of until they expended their last penny in the purchase of another loaf, prevented her partaking even of this poor repast. Her grandfather ate greedily, which she was glad to see.

Their way lay through the same scenes as yesterday, with no variety or improvement. There was the same thick air, difficult to breathe; the same blighted ground, the same hopeless prospect, the same misery and distress. Objects appeared more dim, the noise less, the path more rugged and uneven, for sometimes she stumbled, and became roused, as it were, in the effort to prevent herself from falling. Poor child! the cause was in her tottering feet.

Towards the afternoon, her grandfather complained bitterly of hunger. She approached one of the wretched hovels by the wayside, and knocked with her hand upon the door.

“What would you have here?” said a gaunt man, opening it.

“Charity. A morsel of bread.”

“Do you see that?” returned the man hoarsely, pointing to a kind of bundle on the ground. “That’s a dead child. I and five hundred other men were thrown out of work three months ago. That is my third dead child, and last. Do you think *I* have charity to bestow, or a morsel of bread to spare?”

The child recoiled from the door, and it closed upon her. Impelled by strong necessity, she knocked at another: a neighbouring one, which, yielding to the slight pressure of her hand, flew open.

It seemed that a couple of poor families lived in this hovel, for two women, each among children of her own, occupied different portions of the room. In the centre, stood a grave gentleman in black, who appeared to have just entered, and who held by the arm a boy.

“Here, woman,” he said, “here’s your deaf-and-dumb son. You may thank me for restoring him to you. He was brought before me this morning, charged with theft; and with any other boy it would have gone hard, I assure you. But, as I had compassion on his infirmities, and thought he might have learnt no better, I have



managed to bring him back to you. Take more care of him for the future."

"And won't you give me back *my* son?" said the other woman, hastily rising and confronting him. "Won't you give me back *my* son, sir, who was transported for the same offence?"

"Was *he* deaf and dumb, woman?" asked the gentleman sternly.

"Was he not, sir?"

"You know he was not."

"He was," cried the woman. "He was deaf, dumb, and blind to all that was good and right from his cradle. Her boy may have learnt no better! Where did mine learn better? where could he? who was there to teach him better, or where was it to be learnt?"

"Peace, woman!" said the gentleman; "your boy was in possession of all his senses."

"He was," cried the mother; "and he was the more easy to be led astray because he had them. If you save this boy because he may not know right from wrong, why did you not save mine who was never taught the difference? You gentlemen have as good a right to punish her boy, that God has kept in ignorance of sound and speech, as you have to punish mine, that you kept in ignorance yourselves. How many of the girls and boys—ah, men and women too!—that are brought before you, and you don't pity, are deaf and dumb in their minds, and go wrong in that state, and are punished in that state, body and soul, while you gentlemen are quarrelling among yourselves whether they ought to learn this or that?—Be a just man, sir, and give me back my son!"

"You are desperate," said the gentleman, taking out his snuff-box, "and I am sorry for you."

"I *am* desperate," returned the woman, "and you have made me so. Give me back my son, to work for these helpless children. Be a just man, sir, and, as you have had mercy upon this boy, give me back my son!"

The child had seen and heard enough to know that this was not a place at which to ask for alms. She led the old man softly from the door, and they pursued their journey.

With less and less of hope or strength as they went on, but with an undiminished resolution not to betray by any word or sign her sinking state, so long as she had energy to move, the child, throughout the remainder of that hard day, compelled herself to proceed: not even stopping to rest as frequently as usual, to compensate in some measure for the tardy pace at which she was obliged to walk. Evening was drawing on, but had not closed in, when—still

travelling among the same dismal objects—they came to a busy town.

Faint and spiritless as they were, its streets were insupportable. After humbly asking for relief at some few doors, and being repulsed, they agreed to make their way out of it as speedily as they could, and try if the inmates of any lone house beyond would have more pity on their exhausted state.

They were dragging themselves along through the last street, and the child felt that the time was close at hand when her enfeebled powers would bear no more. There appeared before them, at this juncture, going in the same direction as themselves, a traveller on foot, who, with a portmanteau strapped to his back, leaned upon a stout stick as he walked, and read from a book which he held in his other hand.

It was not an easy matter to come up with him, and beseech his aid, for he walked fast, and was a little distance in advance. At length he stopped, to look more attentively at some passage in his book. Animated with a ray of hope, the child shot on before her grandfather, and, going close to the stranger without rousing him by the sound of her footsteps, began, in a few faint words, to implore his help.

He turned his head. The child clapped her hands together, uttered a wild shriek, and fell senseless at his feet.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

**I**T was the poor schoolmaster. No other than the poor schoolmaster. Scarcely less moved and surprised by the sight of the child than she had been on recognising him, he stood, for a moment, silent and confounded by this unexpected apparition, without even the presence of mind to raise her from the ground.

But quickly recovering his self-possession, he threw down his stick and book, and, dropping on one knee beside her, endeavoured, by such simple means as occurred to him, to restore her to herself; while her grandfather, standing idly by, wrung his hands, and implored her with many endearing expressions to speak to him, were it only a word.

"She is quite exhausted," said the schoolmaster, glancing upward into his face. "You have taxed her powers too far, friend."

"She is perishing of want," rejoined the old man. "I never thought how weak and ill she was till now."

Casting a look upon him, half reproachful and half compassionate, the schoolmaster took the child in his arms, and, bidding the old man gather up her little basket and follow him directly, bore her away at his utmost speed.

There was a small inn within sight, to which, it would seem, he had been directing his steps when so unexpectedly overtaken. Towards this place he hurried with his unconscious burden, and rushing into the kitchen, and calling upon the company there assembled to make way for God's sake, deposited it on a chair before the fire.

The company, who rose in confusion on the schoolmaster's entrance, did as people usually do under such circumstances. Everybody called for his or her favourite remedy, which nobody brought; each cried for more air, at the same time carefully excluding what air there was, by closing round the object of sympathy; and all wondered why somebody else didn't do what it never appeared to occur to them might be done by themselves.

The landlady, however, who possessed more readiness and activity than any of them, and who



"SHE IS QUITE EXHAUSTED," SAID THE SCHOOLMASTER.

had withal a quicker perception of the merits of the case, soon came running in, with a little hot brandy-and-water, followed by her servant-girl, carrying vinegar, hartshorn, smelling-salts, and such other restoratives; which, being duly administered, recovered the child so far as to enable her to thank them in a faint voice, and to extend her hand to the poor schoolmaster, who stood with an anxious face hard by. Without suffering her to speak another word, or so much as to stir a finger any more, the women straightway carried her off to bed; and, having covered her up warm, bathed her cold feet, and

wrapped them in flannel, they dispatched a messenger for the doctor.

The doctor, who was a red-nosed gentleman with a great bunch of seals dangling below a waistcoat of ribbed black satin, arrived with all speed, and, taking his seat by the bedside of poor Nell, drew out his watch, and felt her pulse. Then he looked at her tongue, then he felt her pulse again, and, while he did so, he eyed the half-emptied wine-glass as if in profound abstraction.

"I should give her"—said the doctor at length—"a teaspoonful, every now and then, of hot brandy-and-water."



"Why, that's exactly what we've done, sir!" said the delighted landlady.

"I should also," observed the doctor, who had passed the foot-bath on the stairs, "I should also," said the doctor, in the voice of an oracle, "put her feet in hot water, and wrap them up in flannel. I should likewise," said the doctor with increased solemnity, "give her something light for supper—the wing of a roasted fowl now——"

"Why, goodness gracious me, sir, it's cooking at the kitchen fire this instant!" cried the landlady. And so indeed it was, for the schoolmaster had ordered it to be put down, and it was getting on so well that the doctor might have smelt it if he had tried—perhaps he did.

"You may then," said the doctor, rising gravely, give her a glass of hot mulled port wine, if she likes wine——"

"And a toast, sir?" suggested the landlady.

"Ay," says the doctor, in the tone of a man who makes a dignified concession. "And a toast—of bread. But be very particular to make it of bread, if you please, ma'am."

With which parting injunction, slowly and portentously delivered, the doctor departed, leaving the whole house in admiration of that wisdom which tallied so closely with their own. Everybody said he was a very shrewd doctor indeed, and knew perfectly what people's constitutions were; which there appears some reason to suppose he did.

While her supper was preparing, the child fell into a refreshing sleep, from which they were obliged to rouse her when it was ready. As she evinced extraordinary uneasiness on learning that her grandfather was below-stairs, and was greatly troubled at the thought of their being apart, he took his supper with her. Finding her still very restless on this head, they made him up a bed in an inner room, to which he presently retired. The key of this chamber happened by good fortune to be on that side of the door which was in Nell's room; she turned it on him when the landlady had withdrawn, and crept to bed again with a thankful heart.

The schoolmaster sat for a long time smoking his pipe by the kitchen fire, which was now deserted, thinking, with a very happy face, on the fortunate chance which had brought him so opportunely to the child's assistance, and parrying, as well as in his simple way he could, the inquisitive cross-examination of the landlady, who had a great curiosity to be made acquainted with every particular of Nell's life and history. The poor schoolmaster was so open-hearted, and so little versed in the most ordinary cunning

or deceit, that she could not have failed to succeed in the first five minutes, but that he happened to be unacquainted with what she wished to know; and so he told her. The landlady, by no means satisfied with this assurance, which she considered an ingenious evasion of the question, rejoined that he had his reasons, of course. Heaven forbid that she should wish to pry into the affairs of her customers, which, indeed, were no business of hers, who had so many of her own. She had merely asked a civil question, and to be sure she knew it would meet with a civil answer. She was quite satisfied—quite. She had rather, perhaps, that he would have said at once that he didn't choose to be communicative, because that would have been plain and intelligible. However, she had no right to be offended, of course. He was the best judge, and had a perfect right to say what he pleased; nobody could dispute that for a moment. Oh dear, no!

"I assure you, my good lady," said the mild schoolmaster, "that I have told you the plain truth—as I hope to be saved, I have told you the truth."

"Why, then, I do believe you are in earnest," rejoined the landlady with ready good-humour, "and I'm very sorry I've teased you. But curiosity, you know, is the curse of our sex, and that's the fact."

The landlord scratched his head, as if he thought the curse sometimes involved the other sex likewise; but he was prevented from making any remark to that effect, if he had it in contemplation to do so, by the schoolmaster's rejoinder.

"You should question me for half-a-dozen hours at a sitting, and welcome, and I would answer you patiently for the kindness of heart you have shown to-night, if I could," he said. "As it is, please to take care of her in the morning, and let me know early how she is; and to understand that I am paymaster for the three."

So parting with them on most friendly terms, not the less cordial, perhaps, for this last direction, the schoolmaster went to his bed, and the host and hostess to theirs.

The report in the morning was that the child was better, but was extremely weak, and would at least require a day's rest, and careful nursing, before she could proceed upon her journey. The schoolmaster received this communication with perfect cheerfulness, observing that he had a day to spare—two days for that matter—and could very well afford to wait. As the patient was to sit up in the evening, he appointed to visit her in her room at a certain hour, and, rambling out

with his book, did not return until the hour arrived.

Nell could not help weeping when they were left alone; whereat, and at sight of her pale face and wasted figure, the simple schoolmaster shed a few tears himself, at the same time showing in very energetic language how foolish it was to do so, and how very easily it could be avoided, if one tried.

"It makes me unhappy even in the midst of all this kindness," said the child, "to think that we should be a burden upon you. How can I ever thank you? If I had not met you so far from home, I must have died, and he would have been left alone."

"We'll not talk about dying," said the schoolmaster; "and as to burdens, I have made my fortune since you slept at my cottage."

"Indeed!" cried the child joyfully.

"Oh yes!" returned her friend. "I have been appointed clerk and schoolmaster to a village a long way from here—and a long way from the old one, as you may suppose—at five-and-thirty pounds a year. Five-and-thirty pounds!"

"I am very glad," said the child—"so very, very glad."

"I am on my way there now," resumed the schoolmaster. "They allowed me the stage-coach hire—outside stage-coach hire all the way. Bless you, they grudge me nothing. But, as the time at which I am expected there left me ample leisure, I determined to walk instead. How glad I am to think I did so!"

"How glad should we be!"

"Yes, yes," said the schoolmaster, moving restlessly in his chair, "certainly, that's very true. But you—where are you going, where are you coming from, what have you been doing since you left me, what had you been doing before? Now, tell me—do tell me. I know very little of the world, and perhaps you are better fitted to advise me in its affairs than I am qualified to give advice to you; but I am very sincere, and I have a reason (you have not forgotten it) for loving you. I have felt since that time as if my love for him who died had been transferred to you who stood beside his bed. If this," he added, looking upwards, "is the beautiful creation that springs from ashes, let its peace prosper with me, as I deal tenderly and compassionately by this young child!"

The plain, frank kindness of the honest schoolmaster, the affectionate earnestness of his speech and manner, the truth which was stamped upon his every word and look, gave the child a confidence in him, which the utmost arts of treachery and dissimulation could never have awakened

in her breast. She told him all—that they had no friend or relative—that she had fled with the old man, to save him from a madhouse and all the miseries he dreaded—that she was flying now, to save him from himself—and that she sought an asylum in some remote and primitive place, where the temptation before which he fell would never enter, and her late sorrows and distresses could have no place.

The schoolmaster heard her with astonishment. "This child!"—he thought—"has this child heroically persevered under all doubts and dangers, struggled with poverty and suffering, upheld and sustained by strong affection and the consciousness of rectitude alone? And yet the world is full of such heroism. Have I yet to learn that the hardest and best-borne trials are those which are never chronicled in any earthly record, and are suffered every day? And should I be surprised to hear the story of this child?"

What more he thought or said, matters not. It was concluded that Nell and her grandfather should accompany him to the village whither he was bound, and that he should endeavour to find them some humble occupation by which they could subsist. "We shall be sure to succeed," said the schoolmaster heartily. "The cause is too good a one to fail."

They arranged to proceed upon their journey next evening, as a stage-waggon, which travelled for some distance on the same road as they must take, would stop at the inn to change horses, and the driver for a small gratuity would give Nell a place inside. A bargain was soon struck when the waggon came; and in due time it rolled away; with the child comfortably bestowed among the softer packages, her grandfather and the schoolmaster walking on beside the driver, and the landlady and all the good folks of the inn screaming out their good wishes and farewells.

What a soothing, luxurious, drowsy way of travelling, to lie inside that slowly-moving mountain, listening to the tinkling of the horses' bells, the occasional smacking of the carter's whip, the smooth rolling of the great broad wheels, the rattle of the harness, the cheery good nights of passing travellers joggling past on little short-stepped horses—all made pleasantly indistinct by the thick awning, which seemed made for lazy listening under, till one fell asleep! The very going to sleep, still with an indistinct idea, as the head joggled to and fro upon the pillow, of moving onward with no trouble or fatigue, and hearing all these sounds like dreamy music, lulling to the senses—and the slow waking up, and finding one's self staring out through the



breezy curtain half opened in front, far up into the cold bright sky with its countless stars, and downward at the driver's lantern dancing on like its namesake Jack of the swamps and marshes, and sideways at the dark grim trees, and forward at the long bare road rising up, up, up, until it stopped abruptly at a sharp high ridge as if there were no more road, and all beyond was sky—and the stopping at the inn to bait, and being helped out, and going into a room with fire and candles, and winking very much, and being agreeably reminded that the night was cold, and anxious for very comfort's sake to think it colder than it was!—What a delicious journey was that journey in the waggon!

Then the going on again—so fresh at first, and shortly afterwards so sleepy. The waking from a sound nap as the mail came dashing past like a highway comet, with gleaming lamps and rattling hoofs, and visions of a guard behind, standing up to keep his feet warm, and of a gentleman in a fur cap opening his eyes and looking wild and stupefied—the stopping at the turnpike where the man was gone to bed, and knocking at the door until he answered with a smothered shout from under the bedclothes in the little room above, where the faint light was burning, and presently came down, nightcapped and shivering, to throw the gate wide open, and wish all waggons off the road, except by day. The cold sharp interval between night and morning—the distant streak of light widening and spreading, and turning from grey to white, and from white to yellow, and from yellow to burning red—the presence of day, with all its cheerfulness and life—men and horses at the plough—birds in the trees and hedges, and boys in solitary fields, frightening them away with rattles. The coming to a town—people busy in the market; light carts and chaises round the tavern-yard; tradesmen standing at their doors; men running horses up and down the street for sale; pigs plunging and grunting in the dirty distance, getting off with long strings at their legs, running into clean chemists' shops, and being dislodged with brooms by 'prentices; the night coach changing horses—the passengers cheerless, cold, ugly, and discontented, with three months' growth of hair in one night—the coachman fresh as from a bandbox, and exquisitely beautiful by contrast:—so much bustle, so many things in motion, such a variety of incidents—when was there a journey with so many delights as that journey in the waggon?

Sometimes walking for a mile or two while her grandfather rode inside, and sometimes even prevailing upon the schoolmaster to take her

place and lie down to rest, Nell travelled on very happily until they came to a large town, where the waggon stopped, and where they spent a night. They passed a large church; and in the streets were a number of old houses, built of a kind of earth or plaster, crossed and recrossed in a great many directions with black beams, which gave them a remarkable and very ancient look. The doors, too, were arched and low, some with oaken portals and quaint benches, where the former inhabitants had sat on summer evenings. The windows were latticed in little diamond panes, that seemed to wink and blink upon the passengers as if they were dim of sight. They had long since got clear of the smoke and furnaces, except in one or two solitary instances, where a factory planted among fields withered the space about it, like a burning mountain. When they had passed through this town, they entered again upon the country, and began to draw near their place of destination.

It was not so near, however, but that they spent another night upon the road; not that their doing so was quite an act of necessity, but that the schoolmaster, when they approached within a few miles of his village, had a fidgety sense of his dignity as the new clerk, and was unwilling to make his entry in dusty shoes and travel-disordered dress. It was a fine, clear, autumn morning when they came upon the scene of his promotion, and stopped to contemplate its beauties.

"See—here's the church!" cried the delighted schoolmaster in a low voice; "and that old building close beside it is the school-house, I'll be sworn. Five-and-thirty pounds a year in this beautiful place!"

They admired everything—the old grey porch, the mullioned windows, the venerable grave-stones dotting the green churchyard, the ancient tower, the very weather-cock; the brown thatched roofs of cottage, barn, and homestead, peeping from among the trees; the stream that rippled by the distant water-mill; the blue Welsh mountains far away. It was for such a spot the child had wearied in the dense, dark, miserable haunts of labour. Upon her bed of ashes, and amidst the squalid horrors through which they had forced their way, visions of such scenes—beautiful indeed, but not more beautiful than this sweet reality—had been always present to her mind. They had seemed to melt into a dim and airy distance, as the prospect of ever beholding them again grew fainter; but, as they receded, she had loved and panted for them more.

"I must leave you somewhere for a few minutes," said the schoolmaster, at length breaking the silence into which they had fallen in their gladness. "I have a letter to present, and inquiries to make, you know. Where shall I take you? To the little inn yonder?"

"Let us wait here," rejoined Nell. "The gate is open. We will sit in the church porch till you come back."

"A good place too," said the schoolmaster, leading the way towards it, disencumbering himself of his portmanteau, and placing it on the stone seat. "Be sure that I come back with good news, and am not long gone."

So, the happy schoolmaster put on a brand-new pair of gloves which he had carried in a little parcel in his pocket all the way, and hurried off, full of ardour and excitement.

The child watched him from the porch until the intervening foliage hid him from her view, and then stepped softly out into the old churchyard—so solemn and quiet that every rustle of her dress upon the fallen leaves, which strewed the path and made her footsteps noiseless, seemed an invasion of its silence. It was a very aged, ghostly place; the church had been built many hundreds of years ago, and had once had a convent or monastery attached; for arches in ruins, remains of oriel windows, and fragments of blackened walls, were yet standing; while other portions of the old building, which had crumbled away and fallen down, were mingled with the churchyard earth and overgrown with grass, as if they too claimed a burying-place, and sought to mix their ashes with the dust of men. Hard by these gravestones of dead years, and forming a part of the ruin which some pains had been taken to render habitable in modern times, were two small dwellings with sunken windows and oaken doors, fast hastening to decay, empty and desolate.

Upon these tenements the attention of the child became exclusively riveted. She knew not why. The church, the ruin, the antiquated graves, had equal claims at least upon a stranger's thoughts, but from the moment when her eyes first rested on these two dwellings, she could turn to nothing else. Even when she had made the circuit of the enclosure, and, returning to the porch, sat pensively waiting for their friend, she took her station where she could still look upon them, and felt as if fascinated towards that spot.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

**K**IT'S mother and the single gentleman—upon whose track it is expedient to follow with hurried steps, lest this history should be chargeable with inconstancy, and the offence of leaving its characters in situations of uncertainty and doubt—Kit's mother and the single gentleman, speeding onward in the post-chaise and four, whose departure from the notary's door we have already witnessed, soon left the town behind them, and struck fire from the flints of the broad highway.

The good woman, being not a little embarrassed by the novelty of her situation, and certain maternal apprehensions that perhaps by this time little Jacob, or the baby, or both, had fallen into the fire, or tumbled down-stairs, or had been squeezed behind doors, or had scalded their windpipes in endeavouring to allay their thirst at the spouts of tea-kettles, preserved an uneasy silence; and meeting from the window the eyes of turnpike-men, omnibus drivers, and others, felt in the new dignity of her position like a mourner at a funeral, who, not being greatly afflicted by the loss of the departed, recognises his every-day acquaintance from the window of the mourning-coach, but is constrained to preserve a decent solemnity, and the appearance of being indifferent to all external objects.

To have been indifferent to the companionship of the single gentleman would have been tantamount to being gifted with nerves of steel. Never did chaise enclose, or horses draw, such a restless gentleman as he. He never sat in the same position for two minutes together, but was perpetually tossing his arms and legs about, pulling up the sashes and letting them violently down, or thrusting his head out of one window to draw it in again and thrust it out of another. He carried in his pocket, too, a fire-box of mysterious and unknown construction; and, as sure as ever Kit's mother closed her eyes, so surely—whisk, rattle, fizz—there was the single gentleman consulting his watch by a flame of fire, and letting the sparks fall down among the straw as if there were no such thing as a possibility of himself and Kit's mother being roasted alive before the boys could stop their horses. Whenever they halted to change, there he was—out of the carriage without letting down the steps, bursting about the inn yard like a lighted cracker, pulling out his watch by lamp-light and forgetting to look at it before he put it up again, and, in short, committing so many extravagances that Kit's mother



was quite afraid of him. Then, when the horses were to, in he came like a Harlequin, and before they had gone a mile, out came the watch and the fire-box together, and Kit's mother was wide awake again, with no hope of a wink of sleep for that stage.

"Are you comfortable?" the single gentleman would say after one of these exploits, turning sharply round.

"Quite, sir, thank you."

"Are you sure? An't you cold?"

"It is a little chilly, sir," Kit's mother would reply.

"I knew it!" cried the single gentleman, letting down one of the front glasses. "She wants some brandy-and-water! Of course she does. How could I forget it? Hallo! Stop at the next inn, and call out for a glass of hot brandy-and-water."

It was in vain for Kit's mother to protest that she stood in need of nothing of the kind. The single gentleman was inexorable; and, whenever he had exhausted all other modes and fashions of restlessness, it invariably occurred to him that Kit's mother wanted brandy-and-water.

In this way they travelled on until near midnight, when they stopped to supper, for which meal the single gentleman ordered everything eatable that the house contained; and because Kit's mother didn't eat everything at once, and eat it all, he took it into his head that she must be ill.

"You're faint," said the single gentleman, who did nothing himself but walk about the room. "I see what's the matter with you, ma'am. You're faint."

"Thank you, sir, I'm not indeed."

"I know you are. I'm sure of it. I drag this poor woman from the bosom of her family at a minute's notice, and she goes on getting fainter and fainter before my eyes. I'm a pretty fellow! How many children have you got, ma'am?"

"Two, sir, besides Kit."

"Boys, ma'am?"

"Yes, sir."

"Are they christened?"

"Only half baptized as yet, sir."

"I'm godfather to both of 'em. Remember that, if you please, ma'am. You had better have some mulled wine."

"I couldn't touch a drop indeed, sir."

"You must," said the single gentleman. "I see you want it. I ought to have thought of it before."

Immediately flying to the bell, and calling for mulled wine as impetuously as if it had been wanted for instant use in the recovery of some person apparently drowned, the single gentle-

man made Kit's mother swallow a bumper of it at such a high temperature that the tears ran down her face, and then hustled her off to the chaise again, where—not impossibly from the effects of this agreeable sedative—she soon became insensible to his restlessness, and fell fast asleep. Nor were the happy effects of this prescription of a transitory nature, as, notwithstanding that the distance was greater, and the journey longer, than the single gentleman had anticipated, she did not awake until it was broad day, and they were clattering over the pavement of a town.

"This is the place!" cried her companion, letting down all the glasses. "Drive to the wax-work!"

The boy on the wheeler touched his hat, and setting spurs to his horse, to the end that they might go in brilliantly, all four broke into a smart canter, and dashed through the streets with a noise that brought the good folks wondering to their doors and windows, and drowned the sober voices of the town clocks as they chimed out half-past eight. They drove up to a door round which a crowd of persons were collected, and there stopped.

"What's this?" said the single gentleman, thrusting out his head. "Is anything the matter here?"

"A wedding, sir, a wedding!" cried several voices. "Hurrah!"

The single gentleman, rather bewildered by finding himself the centre of this noisy throng, alighted with the assistance of one of the postillions, and handed out Kit's mother, at the sight of whom the populace cried out, "Here's another wedding!" and roared and leaped for joy.

"The world has gone mad, I think," said the single gentleman, pressing through the concourse with his supposed bride. "Stand back here, will you? and let me knock."

Anything that makes a noise is satisfactory to a crowd. A score of dirty hands were raised directly to knock for him, and seldom has a knocker of equal powers been made to produce more deafening sounds than this particular engine on the occasion in question. Having rendered these voluntary services, the throng modestly retired a little, preferring that the single gentleman should bear their consequences alone.

"Now, sir, what do you want?" said a man with a large white bow at his button-hole, opening the door, and confronting him with a very stoical aspect.

"Who has been married here, my friend?" said the single gentleman.

"I have."

"You! and to whom in the devil's name?"

"What right have you to ask?" returned the bridegroom, eyeing him from top to toe.

"What right!" cried the single gentleman, drawing the arm of Kit's mother more tightly through his own, for that good woman evidently had it in contemplation to run away. "A right you little dream of. Mind, good people, if this fellow has been marrying a minor—Tut, tut, that can't be! Where is the child you have here, my good fellow? You call her Nell. Where is she?"

As he propounded this question, which Kit's mother echoed, somebody in a room near at hand uttered a great shriek, and a stout lady in a white dress came running to the door, and supported herself upon the bridegroom's arm.

"Where is she?" cried this lady. "What news have you brought me? What has become of her?"

The single gentleman started back, and gazed upon the face of the late Mrs. Jarley (that morning wedded to the philosophic George, to the eternal wrath and despair of Mr. Slum the poet), with looks of conflicting apprehension, disappointment, and incredulity. At length he stammered out:

"I ask *you* where she is. What do you mean?"

"Oh, sir!" cried the bride, "if you have come here to do her any good, why weren't you here a week ago?"

"She is not—not dead?" said the person to whom she addressed herself, turning very pale.

"No, not so bad as that."

"I thank God," cried the single gentleman feebly. "Let me come in."

They drew back to admit him, and, when he had entered, closed the door.

"You see in me, good people," he said, turning to the newly-married couple, "one to whom life itself is not dearer than the two persons whom I seek. They would not know me. My features are strange to them, but, if they or either of them are here, take this good woman with you, and let them see her first, for her they both know. If you deny them from any mistaken regard or fear for them, judge of my intentions by their recognition of this person as their old humble friend."

"I always said it!" cried the bride. "I knew she was not a common child! Alas, sir! we have no power to help you, for all that we could do has been tried in vain."

With that, they related to him, without disguise or concealment, all that they knew of Nell and her grandfather, from their first meeting

with them, down to the time of their sudden disappearance; adding (which was quite true) that they had made every possible effort to trace them, but without success; having been at first in great alarm for their safety, as well as on account of the suspicions to which they themselves might one day be exposed in consequence of their abrupt departure. They dwelt upon the old man's imbecility of mind, upon the uneasiness the child had always testified when he was absent, upon the company he had been supposed to keep, and upon the increased depression which had gradually crept over her, and changed her both in health and spirits. Whether she had missed the old man in the night, and, knowing or conjecturing whither he had bent his steps, had gone in pursuit, or whether they had left the house together, they had no means of determining. Certain they considered it that there was but slender prospect left of hearing of them again, and that whether their flight originated with the old man, or with the child, there was now no hope of their return.

To all this the single gentleman listened with the air of a man quite borne down by grief and disappointment. He shed tears when they spoke of the grandfather, and appeared in deep affliction.

Not to protract this portion of our narrative, and to make short work of a long story, let it be briefly written that, before the interview came to a close, the single gentleman deemed he had sufficient evidence of having been told the truth, and that he endeavoured to force upon the bride and bridegroom an acknowledgment of their kindness to the unfriended child, which, however, they steadily declined accepting. In the end, the happy couple jolted away in the caravan to spend their honeymoon in a country excursion; and the single gentleman and Kit's mother stood ruefully before their carriage door.

"Where shall we drive you, sir?" said the postboy.

"You may drive me," said the single gentleman, "to the——" He was not going to add "inn," but he added it for the sake of Kit's mother; and to the inn they went.

Rumours had already got abroad that the little girl who used to show the wax-work was the child of great people, who had been stolen from her parents in infancy, and had only just been traced. Opinion was divided whether she was the daughter of a prince, a duke, an earl, a viscount, or a baron, but all agreed upon the main fact, and that the single gentleman was her father; and all bent forward to catch a glimpse,



though it were only of the tip of his noble nose, as he rode away, desponding, in his four-horse chaise.

What would he have given to know, and what sorrow would have been saved if he had only known, that at that moment both child and grandfather were seated in the old church porch, patiently awaiting the schoolmaster's return!

### CHAPTER XLVIII.

**P**OPULAR rumour concerning the single gentleman and his errand, travelling from mouth to mouth, and waxing stronger in the marvellous as it was bandied about—for your popular rumour, unlike the rolling stone of the proverb, is one which gathers a deal of moss in its wanderings up and down—occasioned his dismounting at the inn door to be looked upon as an exciting and attractive spectacle, which could scarcely be enough admired; and drew together a large concourse of idlers, who, having recently been, as it were, thrown out of employment by the closing of the wax-work and the completion of the nuptial ceremonies, considered his arrival as little else than a special providence, and hailed it with demonstrations of the liveliest joy.

Not at all participating in the general sensation, but wearing the depressed and wearied look of one who sought to meditate on his disappointment in silence and privacy, the single gentleman alighted, and handed out Kit's mother with a gloomy politeness which impressed the lookers-on extremely. That done, he gave her his arm and escorted her into the house, while several active waiters ran on before as a skirmishing party, to clear the way and to show the room which was ready for their reception.

"Any room will do," said the single gentleman. "Let it be near at hand, that's all."

"Close here, sir, if you please to walk this way."

"Would the gentleman like this room?" said a voice, as a little out-of-the-way door at the foot of the well staircase flew briskly open and a head popped out. "He's quite welcome to it. He's as welcome as flowers in May, or coals at Christmas. Would you like this room, sir? Honour me by walking in. Do me the favour, pray."

"Goodness gracious me!" cried Kit's mother, falling back in extreme surprise, "only think of this!"

She had some reason to be astonished, for the

person who proffered the gracious invitation was no other than Daniel Quilp. The little door out of which he had thrust his head was close to the inn larder; and there he stood, bowing with grotesque politeness; as much at his ease as if the door were that of his own house; blighting all the legs of mutton and cold roast fowls by his close companionship, and looking like the evil genius of the cellars come from underground upon some work of mischief.

"Would you do me the honour?" said Quilp.

"I prefer being alone," replied the single gentleman.

"Oh!" said Quilp. And, with that, he darted in again with one jerk, and clapped the little door to, like a figure in a Dutch clock when the hour strikes.

"Why, it was only last night, sir," whispered Kit's mother, "that I left him in Little Bethel."

"Indeed!" said her fellow-passenger. "When did that person come here, waiter?"

"Come down by the night coach this morning, sir."

"Humph! And when is he going?"

"Can't say, sir, really. When the chambermaid asked him just now if he should want a bed, sir, he first made faces at her, and then wanted to kiss her."

"Beg him to walk this way," said the single gentleman. "I should be glad to exchange a word with him, tell him. Beg him to come at once, do you hear?"

The man stared on receiving these instructions, for the single gentleman had not only displayed as much astonishment as Kit's mother at sight of the dwarf, but, standing in no fear of him, had been at less pains to conceal his dislike and repugnance. He departed on his errand, however, and immediately returned, ushering in its object.

"Your servant, sir," said the dwarf. "I encountered your messenger half-way. I thought you'd allow me to pay my compliments to you. I hope you're well. I hope you're very well."

There was a short pause, while the dwarf, with half-shut eyes and puckered face, stood waiting for an answer. Receiving none, he turned towards his more familiar acquaintance.

"Christopher's mother!" he cried. "Such a dear lady, such a worthy woman, so blessed in her honest son! How is Christopher's mother? Have change of air and scene improved her? Her little family too, and Christopher? Do they thrive? Do they flourish? Are they growing into worthy citizens, eh?"

Making his voice ascend in the scale with every succeeding question, Mr. Quilp finished in

a shrill squeak, and subsided into the panting look which was customary with him, and which, whether it were assumed or natural, had equally the effect of banishing all expression from his face, and rendering it, as far as it afforded any index to his mood or meaning, a perfect blank.

"Mr. Quilp," said the single gentleman.

The dwarf put his hand to his great flapped ear, and counterfeited the closest attention.

"We, too, have met before——"

"Surely," cried Quilp, nodding his head. "Oh, surely, sir! Such an honour and pleasure—it's both, Christopher's mother, it's both—is not to be forgotten so soon. By no means!"

"You may remember that, the day I arrived in London, and found the house to which I drove empty and deserted, I was directed by some of the neighbours to you, and waited upon you without stopping for rest or refreshment?"

"How precipitate that was, and yet what an earnest and vigorous measure!" said Quilp, conferring with himself, in imitation of his friend, Mr. Sampson Brass.

"I found," said the single gentleman, "you most unaccountably in possession of everything that had so recently belonged to another man, and that other man, who, up to the time of your entering upon his property, had been looked upon as affluent, reduced to sudden beggary, and driven from house and home."

"We had warrant for what we did, my good sir," rejoined Quilp, "we had our warrant. Don't say driven either. He went of his own accord—vanished in the night, sir."

"No matter," said the single gentleman angrily. "He was gone."

"Yes, he was gone," said Quilp with the same exasperating composure. "No doubt he was gone. The only question was, where. And it's a question still."

"Now, what am I to think," said the single gentleman, sternly regarding him, "of you, who, plainly indisposed to give me any information then—nay, obviously holding back, and sheltering yourself with all kinds of cunning, trickery, and evasion—are dogging my footsteps now?"

"I dogging!" cried Quilp.

"Why, are you not?" returned his questioner, fretted into a state of the utmost irritation. "Were you not, a few hours since, sixty miles off, and in the chapel to which this good woman goes to say her prayers?"

"She was there too, I think?" said Quilp, still perfectly unmoved. "I might say, if I was inclined to be rude, how do I know but you are dogging *my* footsteps? Yes, I was at chapel. What then? I've read in books that pilgrims

were used to go to chapel before they went on journeys, to put up petitions for their safe return. Wise men! journeys are very perilous—especially outside the coach. Wheels come off, horses take fright, coachmen drive too fast, coaches overturn. I always go to chapel before I start on journeys. It's the last thing I do on such occasions, indeed."

That Quilp lied most heartily in this speech, it needed no very great penetration to discover, although, for anything that he suffered to appear in his face, voice, or manner, he might have been clinging to the truth with the quiet constancy of a martyr.

"In the name of all that's calculated to drive one crazy, man," said the unfortunate single gentleman, "have you not, for some reason of your own, taken upon yourself my errand? Don't you know with what object I have come here, and, if you do know, can you throw no light upon it?"

"You think I'm a conjurer, sir," replied Quilp, shrugging up his shoulders. "If I was, I should tell my own fortune—and make it."

"Ah! we have said all we need say, I see," returned the other, throwing himself impatiently upon a sofa. "Pray leave us, if you please."

"Willingly," returned Quilp. "Most willingly. Christopher's mother, my good soul, farewell. A pleasant journey—*back*, sir. Ahem!"

With these parting words, and with a grin upon his features altogether indescribable, but which seemed to be compounded of every monstrous grimace of which men or monkeys are capable, the dwarf slowly retreated and closed the door behind him.

"Oho!" he said when he had regained his own room, and sat himself down in a chair with his arms a-kimbo. "Oho! Are you there, my friend? In-deed!"

Chuckling as though in very great glee, and recompensing himself for the restraint he had lately put upon his countenance by twisting it into all imaginable varieties of ugliness, Mr. Quilp, rocking himself to and fro in his chair, and nursing his left leg at the same time, fell into certain meditations, of which it may be necessary to relate the substance.

First, he reviewed the circumstances which had led to his repairing to that spot, which were briefly these. Dropping in at Mr. Sampson Brass's office on the previous evening, in the absence of that gentleman and his learned sister, he had lighted upon Mr. Swiveller, who chanced at the moment to be sprinkling a glass of warm gin-and-water on the dust of the law, and to be moistening his clay, as the phrase



goes, rather copiously. But as clay in the abstract, when too much moistened, becomes of a weak and uncertain consistency, breaking down in unexpected places, retaining impressions but faintly, and preserving no strength or steadiness of character, so Mr. Swiveller's clay, having imbibed a considerable quantity of moisture, was in a very loose and slippery state, inasmuch that the various ideas impressed upon it were fast losing their distinctive character, and running into each other. It is not uncommon for human clay in this condition to value itself above all things upon its great prudence and sagacity; and Mr. Swiveller, especially prizing himself upon these qualities, took occasion to remark that he had made strange discoveries, in connection with the single gentleman who lodged above, which he had determined to keep within his own bosom, and which neither tortures nor cajolery should ever induce him to reveal. Of this determination Mr. Quilp expressed his high approval, and, setting himself in the same breath to goad Mr. Swiveller on to further hints, soon made out that the single gentleman had been seen in communication with Kit, and that this was the secret which was never to be disclosed.

Possessed of this piece of information, Mr. Quilp directly supposed that the single gentleman above-stairs must be the same individual who had waited on him, and, having assured himself by further inquiries that this surmise was correct, had no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that the intent and object of his correspondence with Kit was the recovery of his old client and the child. Burning with curiosity to know what proceedings were afoot, he resolved to pounce upon Kit's mother as the person least able to resist his arts, and consequently the most likely to be entrapped into such revelations as he sought; so, taking an abrupt leave of Mr. Swiveller, he hurried to her house. The good woman being from home, he made inquiries of a neighbour, as Kit himself did soon afterwards, and, being directed to the chapel, betook himself there, in order to waylay her at the conclusion of the service.

He had not sat in the chapel more than a quarter of an hour, and with his eyes piously fixed upon the ceiling, was chuckling inwardly over the joke of his being there at all, when Kit himself appeared. Watchful as a lynx, one glance showed the dwarf that he had come on business. Absorbed in appearance, as we have seen, and feigning a profound abstraction, he noted every circumstance of his behaviour, and, when he withdrew with his family, shot out after

him. In fine, he traced them to the notary's house; learnt the destination of the carriage from one of the postillions; and knowing that a fast night coach started for the same place, at the very hour which was on the point of striking, from a street hard by, darted round to the coach-office without more ado, and took his seat upon the roof. After passing and repassing the carriage on the road, and being passed and repassed by it sundry times in the course of the night, according as their stoppages were longer or shorter, or their rate of travelling varied, they reached the town almost together. Quilp kept the chaise in sight, mingled with the crowd, learnt the single gentleman's errand, and its failure, and, having possessed himself of all that it was material to know, hurried off, reached the inn before him, had the interview just now detailed, and shut himself up in the little room in which he hastily reviewed all these occurrences.

"You are there, are you, my friend?" he repeated, greedily biting his nails. "I am suspected and thrown aside, and Kit's the confidential agent, is he? I shall have to dispose of him, I fear. If we had come up with them this morning," he continued after a thoughtful pause, "I was ready to prove a pretty good claim. I could have made my profit. But for these canting hypocrites, the lad and his mother, I could get this fiery gentleman as comfortable into my net as our old friend—our mutual friend, ha! ha!—and chubby, rosy Nell. At the worst it's a golden opportunity, not to be lost. Let us find them first, and I'll find means of draining you of some of your superfluous cash, sir, while there are prison bars and bolts, and locks, to keep your friend or kinsman safely. I hate your virtuous people!" said the dwarf, throwing off a bumper of brandy, and smacking his lips, "ah! I hate 'em every one!"

This was not a mere empty vaunt, but a deliberate avowal of his real sentiments; for Mr. Quilp, who loved nobody, had by little and little come to hate everybody, nearly or remotely connected with his ruined client:—the old man himself, because he had been able to deceive him and elude his vigilance—the child, because she was the object of Mrs. Quilp's commiseration and constant self-reproach—the single gentleman, because of his unconcealed aversion to himself—Kit and his mother, most mortally for the reasons already shown. Above and beyond that general feeling of opposition to them, which would have been inseparable from his ravenous desire to enrich himself by these altered circumstances, Daniel Quilp hated them every one.

In this amiable mood, Mr. Quilp enlivened himself and his hatreds with more brandy, and then, changing his quarters, withdrew to an obscure alehouse, under cover of which seclusion he instituted all possible inquiries that might lead to the discovery of the old man and his grandchild. But all was in vain. Not the slightest trace or clue could be obtained. They had left the town by night; no one had seen them go; no one had met them on the road; the driver of no coach, cart, or waggon had seen any travellers answering their description; nobody had fallen in with them or heard of them. Convinced at last that for the present all such attempts were hopeless, he appointed two or three scouts, with promises of large rewards in case of their forwarding him any intelligence, and returned to London by next day's coach.

It was some gratification to Mr. Quilp to find, as he took his place upon the roof, that Kit's mother was alone inside; from which circumstance he derived, in the course of the journey, much cheerfulness of spirit, inasmuch as her solitary condition enabled him to terrify her with many extraordinary annoyances; such as hanging over the side of the coach at the risk of his life, and staring in with his great goggle eyes, which seemed in hers the more horrible from his face being upside down; dodging her in this way from one window to another; getting nimbly down whenever they changed horses, and thrusting his head in at the window with a dismal squint; which ingenious tortures had such an effect upon Mrs. Nubbles, that she was quite unable for the time to resist the belief that Mr. Quilp did in his own person represent and embody that Evil Power who was so vigorously attacked at Little Bethel, and who, by reason of her backslidings in respect of Astley's and oysters, was now frolicsome and rampant.

Kit, having been apprised by letter of his mother's intended return, was waiting for her at the coach-office; and great was his surprise when he saw, leering over the coachman's shoulder like some familiar demon, invisible to all eyes but his, the well-known face of Quilp.

"How are you, Christopher?" croaked the dwarf from the coach-top. "All right, Christopher. Mother's inside."

"Why, how did he come here, mother?" whispered Kit.

"I don't know how he came, or why, my dear," rejoined Mrs. Nubbles, dismounting with her son's assistance, "but he has been a terri-

fying of me out of my seven senses all this blessed day."

"He has?" cried Kit.

"You wouldn't believe it, that you wouldn't," replied his mother, "but don't say a word to him, for I really don't believe he's human. Hush! Don't turn round as if I was talking of him, but he's a squinting at me now in the full blaze of the coach lamp, quite awful!"

In spite of his mother's injunction, Kit turned sharply round to look. Mr. Quilp was serenely gazing at the stars, quite absorbed in celestial contemplation.

"Oh, he's the artfullest creetur!" cried Mrs. Nubbles. "But come away. Don't speak to him for the world."

"Yes, I will, mother. What nonsense! I say, sir——"

Mr. Quilp affected to start, and looked smilingly round.

"You let my mother alone, will you?" said Kit. "How dare you tease a poor lone woman like her, making her miserable and melancholy, as if she hadn't got enough to make her so without you? An't you ashamed of yourself, you little monster?"

"Monster!" said Quilp inwardly with a smile. "Ugliest dwarf that could be seen anywhere for a penny—monster—ah!"

"You show her any of your impudence again," resumed Kit, shouldering the bandbox, "and I tell you what, Mr. Quilp, I won't bear with you any more. You have no right to do it; I'm sure we never interfered with you. This isn't the first time; and, if ever you worry or frighten her again, you'll oblige me (though I should be very sorry to do it, on account of your size) to beat you."

Quilp said not a word in reply, but, walking up so close to Kit as to bring his eyes within two or three inches of his face, looked fixedly at him, retreated a little distance without averting his gaze, approached again, again withdrew, and so on for half-a-dozen times, like a head in a phantasmagoria. Kit stood his ground as if in expectation of an immediate assault, but, finding that nothing came of these gestures, snapped his fingers and walked away; his mother dragging him off as fast as she could, and, even in the midst of his news of little Jacob and the baby, looking anxiously over her shoulder to see if Quilp were following.



## CHAPTER XLIX.

**K**IT'S mother might have spared herself the trouble of looking back so often, for nothing was further from Mr. Quilp's thoughts than any intention of pursuing her and her son, or renewing the quarrel with which they had parted. He went his way, whistling from time to time some fragments of a tune; and, with a face quite tranquil and composed, jogged pleasantly towards home; entertaining himself as he went with visions of the fears and terrors of Mrs. Quilp, who, having received no intelligence of him for three whole days and two nights, and having had no previous notice of his absence, was doubtless by that time in a state of distraction, and constantly fainting away with anxiety and grief.

This facetious probability was so congenial to the dwarf's humour, and so exquisitely amusing to him, that he laughed as he went along until the tears ran down his cheeks; and more than once, when he found himself in a by-street, vented his delight in a shrill scream, which, greatly terrifying any lonely passenger who happened to be walking on before him expecting nothing so little, increased his mirth, and made him remarkably cheerful and light-hearted.

In this happy flow of spirits Mr. Quilp reached Tower Hill, when, gazing up at the window of his own sitting-room, he thought he descried more light than is usual in a house of mourning. Drawing nearer, and listening attentively, he could hear several voices in earnest conversation, among which he could distinguish, not only those of his wife and mother-in-law, but the tongues of men.

"Ha!" cried the jealous dwarf. "What's this? Do they entertain such visitors while I'm away?"

A smothered cough from above was the reply. He felt in his pockets for his latch-key, but had forgotten it. There was no resource but to knock at the door.

"A light in the passage," said Quilp, peeping through the keyhole. "A very soft knock; and, by your leave, my lady, I may yet steal upon you unawares. Soho!"

A very low and gentle rap received no answer from within. But after a second application to the knocker, no louder than the first, the door was softly opened by the boy from the wharf, whom Quilp instantly gagged with one hand, and dragged into the street with the other.

"You'll throttle me, master," whispered the boy. "Let go, will you?"

"Who's up-stairs, you dog?" retorted Quilp in the same tone. "Tell me. And don't speak above your breath, or I'll choke you in good earnest."

The boy could only point to the window, and reply with a stifled giggle, expressive of such intense enjoyment, that Quilp clutched him by the throat again, and might have carried his threat into execution, or at least have made very good progress towards that end, but for the boy's nimbly extricating himself from his grasp, and fortifying himself behind the nearest post, at which, after some fruitless attempts to catch him by the hair of his head, his master was obliged to come to a parley.

"Will you answer me?" said Quilp. "What's going on above?"

"You won't let one speak," replied the boy. "They—ha, ha, ha!—they think you're—you're dead. Ha, ha ha!"

"Dead!" cried Quilp, relaxing into a grim laugh himself. "No! Do they? Do they really, you dog?"

"They think you're—you're drowned," replied the boy, who in his malicious nature had a strong infusion of his master. "You was last seen on the brink of the wharf, and they think you tumbled over. Ha, ha!"

The prospect of playing the spy under such delicious circumstances, and of disappointing them all by walking in alive, gave more delight to Quilp than the greatest stroke of good fortune could possibly have inspired him with. He was no less tickled than his hopeful assistant, and they both stood for some seconds, grinning and gasping, and wagging their heads at each other, on either side of the post, like an unmatchable pair of Chinese idols.

"Not a word," said Quilp, making towards the door on tiptoe. "Not a sound, not so much as a creaking board, or a stumble against a cobweb. Drowned, eh, Mrs. Quilp? Drowned!"

So saying, he blew out the candle, kicked off his shoes, and groped his way up-stairs; leaving his delighted young friend in an ecstasy of summersets on the pavement.

The bedroom door on the staircase being unlocked, Mr. Quilp slipped in, and planted himself behind the door of communication between that chamber and the sitting-room, which standing ajar to render both more airy, and having a very convenient chink (of which he had often availed himself for purposes of espial, and had, indeed, enlarged with his pocket-knife), enabled him not only to hear, but to see distinctly, what was passing.

Applying his eye to this convenient place, he

descried Mr. Brass seated at the table with pen, ink, and paper, and the case-bottle of rum—his own case-bottle, and his own particular Jamaica—convenient to his hand; with hot water, fragrant lemons, white lump sugar, and all things fitting; from which choice materials, Sampson, by no means insensible to their claims upon his attention, had compounded a mighty glass of punch reeking hot; which he was at that very moment stirring up with a tea-spoon, and contemplating with looks in which a faint assumption of sentimental regret struggled but weakly with a bland and comfortable joy. At the same table, with both her elbows upon it, was Mrs. Jiniwin; no longer sipping other people's punch feloniously with tea-spoons, but taking deep draughts from a jorum of her own; while her daughter—not exactly with ashes on her head, or sackcloth on her back, but preserving a very decent and becoming appearance of sorrow nevertheless—was reclining in an easy-chair, and soothing her grief with a smaller allowance of the same glib liquid. There were also present a couple of water-side men, bearing between them certain machines called drags; even these fellows were accommodated with a stiff glass apiece; and as they drank with a great relish, and were naturally of a red-nosed, pimple-faced, convivial look, their presence rather increased than detracted from that decided appearance of comfort, which was the great characteristic of the party.

"If I could poison that dear old lady's rum-and-water," murmured Quilp, "I'd die happy."

"Ah!" said Mr. Brass, breaking the silence, and raising his eyes to the ceiling with a sigh, "who knows but he may be looking down upon us now? Who knows but he may be surveying of us from—from somewheres or another, and contemplating us with a watchful eye? Oh Lor!"

Here Mr. Brass stopped to drink half his punch, and then resumed; looking at the other half, as he spoke, with a dejected smile.

"I can almost fancy," said the lawyer, shaking his head, "that I see his eye glistening down at the very bottom of my liquor. When shall we look upon his like again? Never, never! One minute we are here"—holding his tumbler before his eyes—"the next we are there"—gulping down its contents, and striking himself emphatically a little below the chest—"in the silent tomb. To think that I should be drinking his very rum! It seems like a dream."

With the view, no doubt, of testing the reality of his position, Mr. Brass pushed his tumbler as

he spoke towards Mrs. Jiniwin for the purpose of being replenished; and turned towards the attendant mariners.

"The search has been quite unsuccessful, then?"

"Quite, master. But I should say that, if he turns up anywhere, he'll come ashore somewhere about Grimidge to-morrow, at ebb tide, eh, mate?"

The other gentleman assented, observing that he was expected at the Hospital, and that several pensioners would be ready to receive him whenever he arrived.

"Then we have nothing for it but resignation," said Mr. Brass; "nothing but resignation, and expectation. It would be a comfort to have his body; it would be a dreary comfort."

"Oh, beyond a doubt!" assented Mrs. Jiniwin hastily; "if we once had that, we should be quite sure."

"With regard to the descriptive advertisement," said Sampson Brass, taking up his pen. "It is a melancholy pleasure to recall his traits. Respecting his legs, now—?"

"Crooked, certainly," said Mrs. Jiniwin.

"Do you think they *were* crooked?" said Brass in an insinuating tone. "I think I see them now coming up the street very wide apart, in nankeen pantaloons a little shrunk, and without straps. Ah! what a vale of tears we live in! Do we say crooked?"

"I think they were a little so," observed Mrs. Quilp with a sob.

"Legs crooked," said Brass, writing as he spoke.

"Large head, short body, legs crooked—"

"Very crooked," suggested Mrs. Jiniwin.

"We'll not say very crooked, ma'am," said Brass piously. "Let us not bear hard upon the weaknesses of the deceased. He is gone, ma'am, to where his legs will never come in question.—We will content ourselves with crooked, Mrs. Jiniwin."

"I thought you wanted the truth," said the old lady. "That's all."

"Bless your eyes, how I love you!" muttered Quilp. "There she goes again. Nothing but punch!"

"This is an occupation," said the lawyer, laying down his pen and emptying his glass, "which seems to bring him before my eyes like the Ghost of Hamlet's father, in the very clothes that he wore on work-a-days. His coat, his waistcoat, his shoes and stockings, his trousers, his hat, his wit and humour, his pathos and his umbrella, all come before me like visions of my youth. His linen!" said Mr. Brass, smiling fondly at the wall, "his linen, which was always of a



particular colour, for such was his whim and fancy—how plain I see his linen now!”

“You had better go on, sir,” said Mrs. Jiniwin impatiently.

“True, ma’am, true,” cried Mr. Brass. — “Our faculties must not freeze with grief. I’ll trouble you for a little more of that, ma’am. A question now arises with relation to his nose.”

“Flat,” said Mrs. Jiniwin.

“Aquiline!” cried Quilp, thrusting in his head, and striking the feature with his fist.

“Aquiline, you hag! Do you see it? Do you call this flat? Do you? Eh?”

“Oh, capital, capital!” shouted Brass, from the mere force of habit. “Excellent! How very good he is! He’s a most remarkable man—so extremely whimsical! Such an amazing power of taking people by surprise!”

Quilp paid no regard whatever to these compliments, nor to the dubious and frightened look into which the lawyer gradually subsided, nor to the shrieks of his wife and mother-in-law, nor to



“AQUILINE!” CRIED QUILP, THRUSTING IN HIS HEAD.

the latter's running from the room, nor to the former's fainting away. Keeping his eye fixed on Sampson Brass, he walked up to the table, and, beginning with his glass, drank off the contents, and went regularly round until he had emptied the other two, when he seized the case-bottle, and, hugging it under his arm, surveyed him with a most extraordinary leer.

“Not yet, Sampson,” said Quilp. “Not just yet!”

“Oh, very good indeed!” cried Brass, re-

covering his spirits a little. “Ha, ha, ha! Oh, exceedingly good! There's not another man alive who would carry it off like that. A most difficult position to carry off. But he has such a flow of good-humour, such an amazing flow!”

“Good night,” said the dwarf, nodding expressively.

“Good night, sir, good night,” cried the lawyer, retreating backwards towards the door. “This is a joyful occasion indeed, extremely

joyful. Ha, ha, ha! Oh, very rich. very rich indeed, re-markably so!"

Waiting until Mr. Brass's ejaculations died away in the distance (for he continued to pour them out, all the way down-stairs), Quilp advanced towards the two men, who yet lingered in a kind of stupid amazement.

"Have you been dragging the river all day, gentlemen?" said the dwarf, holding the door open with great politeness.

"And yesterday too, master."

"Dear me, you've had a deal of trouble. Pray consider everything yours that you find upon the—upon the body. Good night!"

The men looked at each other, but had evidently no inclination to argue the point just then, and shuffled out of the room. This speedy clearance effected, Quilp locked the doors; and, still embracing the case-bottle with shrugged-up shoulders and folded arms, stood looking at his insensible wife like a dismounted nightmare.

#### CHAPTER L.

**M**ATRIMONIAL differences are usually discussed by the parties concerned in the form of dialogue, in which the lady bears at least her full half-share. Those of Mr. and Mrs. Quilp, however, were an exception to the general rule; the remarks which they occasioned being limited to a long soliloquy on the part of the gentleman, with perhaps a few deprecatory observations from the lady, not extending beyond a trembling monosyllable uttered at long intervals, and in a very submissive and humble tone. On the present occasion, Mrs. Quilp did not for a long time venture even on this gentle defence, but, when she had recovered from her fainting fit, sat in a tearful silence, meekly listening to the reproaches of her lord and master.

Of these Mr. Quilp delivered himself with the utmost animation and rapidity, and with so many distortions of limb and feature, that even his wife, although tolerably well accustomed to his proficiency in these respects, was well-nigh beside herself with alarm. But the Jamaica rum, and the joy of having occasioned a heavy disappointment, by degrees cooled Mr. Quilp's wrath; which, from being at savage heat, dropped slowly to the bantering or chuckling point, at which it steadily remained.

"So you thought I was dead and gone, did

you?" said Quilp. "You thought you were a widow, eh? Ha, ha, ha, you jade!"

"Indeed, Quilp," returned his wife, "I'm very sorry——"

"Who doubts it?" cried the dwarf. "You very sorry! To be sure you are! Who doubts that you're *very* sorry?"

"I don't mean sorry that you have come home again alive and well," said his wife, "but sorry that I should have been led into such a belief. I am glad to see you, Quilp; indeed I am."

In truth, Mrs. Quilp did seem a great deal more glad to behold her lord than might have been expected, and did evince a degree of interest in his safety which, all things considered, was rather unaccountable. Upon Quilp, however, this circumstance made no impression, farther than as it moved him to snap his fingers close to his wife's eyes, with divers grins of triumph and derision.

"How could you go away so long, without saying a word to me, or letting me hear of you, or know anything about you?" asked the poor little woman, sobbing. "How could you be so cruel, Quilp?"

"How could I be so cruel! cruel!" cried the dwarf. "Because I was in the humour. I'm in the humour now. I shall be cruel when I like. I'm going away again."

"Not again!"

"Yes, again. I'm going away now. I'm off directly. I mean to go and live wherever the fancy seizes me—at the wharf—at the counting-house—and be a jolly bachelor. You were a widow in anticipation. Damme," screamed the dwarf, "I'll be a bachelor in earnest!"

"You can't be serious, Quilp," sobbed his wife.

"I tell you," said the dwarf, exulting in his project, "that I'll be a bachelor, a devil-may-care bachelor; and I'll have my bachelor's hall at the counting-house, and at such times come near it if you dare. And mind, too, that I don't pounce in upon you at unseasonable hours again, for I'll be a spy upon you, and come and go like a mole or a weasel. Tom Scott—where's Tom Scott?"

"Here I am, master," cried the voice of the boy, as Quilp threw up the window.

"Wait there, you dog," returned the dwarf, "to carry a bachelor's portmanteau. Pack it up, Mrs. Quilp. Knock up the dear old lady to help; knock her up. Hallo there! Hallo!"

With these exclamations, Mr. Quilp caught up the poker, and, hurrying to the door of the good lady's sleeping-closet, beat upon it therewith until she awoke in inexpressible terror, thinking



that her amiable son-in-law surely intended to murder her in justification of the legs she had slandered. Impressed with this idea, she was no sooner fairly awake than she screamed violently, and would have quickly precipitated herself out of the window and through a neighbouring sky-light, if her daughter had not hastened in to undeceive her, and implore her assistance. Somewhat reassured by her account of the service she was required to render, Mrs. Jiniwin made her appearance in a flannel dressing-gown; and both mother and daughter, trembling with terror and cold—for the night was now far advanced—obeyed Mr. Quilp's directions in submissive silence. Prolonging his preparations as much as possible, for their greater comfort, that eccentric gentleman superintended the packing of his wardrobe, and having added to it, with his own hands, a plate, knife and fork, spoon, teacup and saucer, and other small household matters of that nature, strapped up the portmanteau, took it on his shoulders, and actually marched off without another word, and with the case-bottle (which he had never once put down) still tightly clasped under his arm. Consigning his heavier burden to the care of Tom Scott when he reached the street, taking a dram from the bottle for his own encouragement, and giving the boy a rap on the head with it as a small taste for himself, Quilp very deliberately led the way to the wharf, and reached it between three and four o'clock in the morning.

"Snug," said Quilp, when he had groped his way to the wooden counting-house, and opened the door with a key he carried about with him. "Beautifully snug! Call me at eight, you dog."

With no more formal leave-taking or explanation, he clutched the portmanteau, shut the door on his attendant, and climbing on the desk, and rolling himself up as round as a hedgehog in an old boat-cloak, fell fast asleep.

Being roused in the morning at the appointed time, and roused with difficulty, after his late fatigues, Quilp instructed Tom Scott to make a fire in the yard of sundry pieces of old timber, and to prepare some coffee for breakfast; for the better furnishing of which repast he intrusted him with certain small moneys, to be expended in the purchase of hot rolls, butter, sugar, Yarmouth bloaters, and other articles of house-keeping; so that in a few minutes a savoury meal was smoking on the board. With this substantial comfort the dwarf regaled himself to his heart's content; and being highly satisfied with this free and gipsy mode of life (which he had often meditated, as offering, whenever he chose to avail himself of it, an agreeable freedom

from the restraints of matrimony, and a choice means of keeping Mrs. Quilp and her mother in a state of incessant agitation and suspense), bestirred himself to improve his retreat, and render it more commodious and comfortable.

With this view, he issued forth to a place hard by, where sea-stores were sold, purchased a second-hand hammock, and had it slung in seamanlike fashion from the ceiling of the counting-house. He also caused to be erected, in the same mouldy cabin, an old ship's stove with a rusty funnel to carry the smoke through the roof; and, these arrangements completed, surveyed them with ineffable delight.

"I've got a country house like Robinson Crusoe," said the dwarf, ogling the accommodations; "a solitary, sequestered, desolate-island sort of spot, where I can be quite alone when I have business on hand, and be secure from all spies and listeners. Nobody near me here but rats, and they are fine stealthy secret fellows. I shall be as merry as a grig among these gentry. I'll look out for one like Christopher, and poison him—ha, ha, ha! Business, though—business—we must be mindful of business in the midst of pleasure, and the time has flown this morning, I declare."

Enjoining Tom Scott to await his return, and not to stand upon his head, or throw a summer-set, or so much as walk upon his hands meanwhile, on pain of lingering torments, the dwarf threw himself into a boat, and crossing to the other side of the river, and then speeding away on foot, reached Mr. Swiveller's usual house of entertainment in Bevis Marks, just as that gentleman sat down alone to dinner in its dusky parlour.

"Dick," said the dwarf, thrusting his head in at the door, "my pet, my pupil, the apple of my eye, hey, hey!"

"Oh, you're there, are you?" returned Mr. Swiveller. "How are you?"

"How's Dick?" retorted Quilp. "How's the cream of clerkship, eh?"

"Why, rather sour, sir," replied Mr. Swiveller. "Beginning to border upon cheesiness, in fact."

"What's the matter?" said the dwarf, advancing. "Has Sally proved unkind? 'Of all the girls that are so smart, there's none like—' Eh, Dick?"

"Certainly not," replied Mr. Swiveller, eating his dinner with great gravity, "none like her. She's the sphynx of private life, is Sally B."

"You're out of spirits," said Quilp, drawing up a chair. "What's the matter?"

"The law don't agree with me," returned Dick. "It isn't moist enough, and there's too

much confinement. I have been thinking of running away."

"Bah!" said the dwarf. "Where would you run to, Dick?"

"I don't know," returned Mr. Swiveller. "Towards Highgate, I suppose. Perhaps the bells might strike up 'Turn again, Swiveller, Lord Mayor of London.' Whittington's name was Dick. I wish cats were scarcer."

Quilp looked at his companion with his eyes screwed up into a comical expression of curiosity, and patiently awaited his further explanation;

upon which, however, Mr. Swiveller appeared in no hurry to enter, as he ate a very long dinner in profound silence, finally pushed away his plate, threw himself back into his chair, folded his arms, and stared ruefully at the fire, in which some ends of cigars were smoking on their own account, and sending up a fragrant odour.

"Perhaps you'd like a bit of cake," said Dick, at last turning to the dwarf. "You're quite welcome to it. You ought to be, for it's of your making."

"What do you mean?" said Quilp.



"BOTH MOTHER AND DAUGHTER, TREMBLING WITH TERROR AND COLD, . . . OBEYED MR. QUILP'S DIRECTIONS IN SUBMISSIVE SILENCE."

Mr. Swiveller replied by taking from his pocket a small and very greasy parcel, slowly unfolding it, and displaying a little slab of plum-cake, extremely indigestible in appearance, and bordered with a paste of white sugar an inch and a half deep.

"What should you say this was?" demanded Mr. Swiveller.

"It looks like bride-cake," replied the dwarf, grinning.

"And whose should you say it was?" inquired Mr. Swiveller, rubbing the pastry

against his nose with a dreadful calmness. "Whose?"

"Not——"

"Yes," said Dick, "the same. You needn't mention her name. There's no such name now. Her name is Cheggs now, Sophy Cheggs. Yet loved I as man never loved that hadn't wooden legs, and my heart, my heart is breaking for the love of Sophy Cheggs."

With this extemporaneous adaptation of a popular ballad to the distressing circumstances of his own case, Mr. Swiveller folded up the parcel



again, beat it very flat between the palms of his hands, thrust it into his breast, buttoned his coat over it, and folded his arms upon the whole.

"Now I hope you're satisfied, sir," said Dick; "and I hope Fred's satisfied. You went partners in the mischief, and I hope you like it. This is the triumph I was to have, is it? It's like the old country dance of that name, where there are two gentlemen to one lady, and one has her, and the other hasn't, but comes limping up behind to make out the figure. But it's Destiny, and mine's a crusher!"

Disguising his secret joy in Mr. Swiveller's defeat, Daniel Quilp adopted the surest means of soothing him, by ringing the bell, and ordering in a supply of rosy wine (that is to say, of its usual representative), which he put about with great alacrity, calling upon Mr. Swiveller to pledge him in various toasts derisive of Cheggs, and eulogistic of the happiness of single men. Such was their impression on Mr. Swiveller, coupled with the reflection that no man could oppose his destiny, that in a very short space of time his spirits rose surprisingly, and he was enabled to give the dwarf an account of the receipt of the cake, which, it appeared, had been brought to Bevis Marks by the two surviving Miss Wackleses in person, and delivered at the office door with much giggling and joyfulness.

"Ha!" said Quilp. "It will be our turn to giggle soon. And that reminds me—you spoke of young Trent—where is he?"

Mr. Swiveller explained that his respectable friend had recently accepted a responsible situation in a locomotive gaming-house, and was at that time absent on a professional tour among the adventurous spirits of Great Britain.

"That's unfortunate," said the dwarf, "for I came, in fact, to ask you about him. A thought has occurred to me, Dick; your friend over the way——"

"Which friend?"

"In the first floor."

"Yes?"

"Your friend in the first floor, Dick, may know him."

"No, he don't," said Mr. Swiveller, shaking his head.

"Don't. No, because he has never seen him," rejoined Quilp; "but if we were to bring them together, who knows, Dick, but Fred, properly introduced, would serve his turn almost as well as little Nell or her grandfather—who knows but it might make the young fellow's fortune, and, through him, yours, eh?"

"Why, the fact is, you see," said Mr. Swiveller, "that they *have been* brought together."

"Have been!" cried the dwarf, looking suspiciously at his companion. "Through whose means?"

"Through mine," said Dick, slightly confused. "Didn't I mention it to you the last time you called over yonder?"

"You know you didn't," returned the dwarf.

"I believe you're right," said Dick. "No, I didn't, I recollect. Oh yes, I brought 'em together that very day! It was Fred's suggestion."

"And what came of it?"

"Why, instead of my friend's bursting into tears when he knew who Fred was, embracing him kindly, and telling him that he was his grandfather, or his grandmother in disguise (which we fully expected), he flew into a tremendous passion; called him all manner of names; said it was in a great measure his fault that little Nell and the old gentleman had ever been brought to poverty; didn't hint at our taking anything to drink; and—and, in short, rather turned us out of the room than otherwise."

"That's strange," said the dwarf, musing.

"So we remarked to each other at the time," returned Dick coolly, "but quite true."

Quilp was plainly staggered by this intelligence, over which he brooded for some time in moody silence, often raising his eyes to Mr. Swiveller's face, and sharply scanning its expression. As he could read in it, however, no additional information, or anything to lead him to believe he had spoken falsely; and as Mr. Swiveller, left to his own meditations, sighed deeply, and was evidently growing maudlin on the subject of Mrs. Cheggs; the dwarf soon broke up the conference and took his departure, leaving the bereaved one to his melancholy ruminations.

"Have been brought together, eh?" said the dwarf as he walked the streets alone. "My friend has stolen a march upon me. It led him to nothing, and therefore is no great matter, save in the intention. I'm glad he has lost his mistress. Ha, ha! The blockhead mustn't leave the law at present. I'm sure of him where he is, whenever I want him for my own purposes, and, besides, he's a good unconscious spy on Brass, and tells, in his cups, all that he sees and hears. You're useful to me, Dick, and cost nothing but a little treating now and then. I am not sure that it may not be worth while, before long, to take credit with the stranger, Dick, by discovering your designs upon the child; but for the present we'll remain the best friends in the world, with your good leave."

Pursuing these thoughts, and gasping as he

went along, after his own peculiar fashion. Mr. Quilp once more crossed the Thames, and shut himself up in his Bachelor's Hall, which, by reason of his newly-erected chimney depositing the smoke inside the room and carrying none of it off, was not quite so agreeable as more fastidious people might have desired. Such inconveniences, however, instead of disgusting the dwarf with his new abode, rather suited his humour; so, after dining luxuriously from the public-house, he lighted his pipe, and smoked against the chimney until nothing of him was visible through the mist but a pair of red and highly-inflamed eyes, with sometimes a dim vision of his head and face, as, in a violent fit of coughing, he slightly stirred the smoke and scattered the heavy wreaths by which they were obscured. In the midst of this atmosphere, which must infallibly have smothered any other man, Mr. Quilp passed the evening with great cheerfulness; solacing himself all the time with the pipe and the case-bottle; and occasionally entertaining himself with a melodious howl, intended for a song, but bearing not the faintest resemblance to any scrap of any piece of music, vocal or instrumental, ever invented by man. Thus he amused himself until nearly midnight, when he turned into his hammock with the utmost satisfaction.

The first sound that met his ears in the morning—as he half opened his eyes, and, finding himself so unusually near the ceiling, entertained a drowsy idea that he must have been transformed into a fly or blue-bottle in the course of the night—was that of a stifled sobbing and weeping in the room.

Peeping cautiously over the side of his hammock, he descried Mrs. Quilp, to whom, after contemplating her for some time in silence, he communicated a violent start by suddenly yelling out:

“Halloo!”

“Oh, Quilp!” cried his poor little wife, looking up. “How you frightened me!”

“I meant to, you jade,” returned the dwarf. “What do you want here? I’m dead, an’t I?”

“Oh, please come home, do come home!” said Mrs. Quilp, sobbing; “we’ll never do so any more, Quilp, and, after all, it was only a mistake that grew out of our anxiety.”

“Out of your anxiety!” grinned the dwarf. “Yes, I know that—out of your anxiety for my death. I shall come home when I please, I tell you. I shall come home when I please, and go when I please. I’ll be a Will o’ the Wisp, now here, now there, dancing about you always, starting up when you least expect

me, and keeping you in a constant state of restlessness and irritation. Will you begone?”

Mrs. Quilp durst only make a gesture of entreaty.

“I tell you no,” cried the dwarf. “No. If you dare to come here again unless you’re sent for, I’ll keep watch-dogs in the yard that’ll growl and bite—I’ll have man-traps, cunningly altered and improved for catching women—I’ll have spring guns that shall explode when you tread upon the wires, and blow you into little pieces. Will you go?”

“Do forgive me. Do come back,” said his wife earnestly.

“No-o-o-o-o!” roared Quilp. “Not till my own good time, and then I’ll return again as often as I choose, and be accountable to nobody for my goings or comings. You see the door there. Will you go?”

Mr. Quilp delivered this last command in such a very energetic voice, and moreover accompanied it with such a sudden gesture, indicative of an intention to spring out of his hammock, and, nightcapped as he was, bear his wife home again through the public streets, that she sped away like an arrow. Her worthy lord stretched his neck and eyes until she had crossed the yard, and then, not at all sorry to have had this opportunity of carrying his point, and asserting the sanctity of his castle, fell into an immoderate fit of laughter, and laid himself down to sleep again.

## CHAPTER LI.

THE bland and open-hearted proprietor of Bachelor's Hall slept on amidst the congenial accompaniments of rain, mud, dirt, damp, fog, and rats, until late in the day;

when, summoning his valet Tom Scott to assist him to rise, and to prepare breakfast, he quitted his couch, and made his toilet. This duty performed, and his repast ended, he again betook himself to Bevis Marks.

This visit was not intended for Mr. Swiveller, but for his friend and employer, Mr. Sampson Brass. Both gentlemen, however, were from home; nor was the life and light of law, Miss Sally, at her post either. The fact of their joint desertion of the office was made known to all comers by a scrap of paper in the handwriting of Mr. Swiveller, which was attached to the bell-handle, and which, giving the reader no clue to the time of day when it was first posted, fur-





"HALLOA!"—P. 186





nished him with the rather vague and unsatisfactory information that that gentleman would "return in an hour."

"There's a servant, I suppose," said the dwarf, knocking at the house-door. "She'll do."

After a sufficiently long interval, the door was opened, and a small voice immediately accosted him with, "Oh, please will you leave a card or message?"

"Eh?" said the dwarf, looking down (it was something quite new to him) upon the small servant.

To this, the child, conducting her conversation as upon the occasion of her first interview with Mr. Swiveller, again replied, "Oh, please will you leave a card or message?"

"I'll write a note," said the dwarf, pushing past her into the office; "and mind your master has it directly he comes home." So Mr. Quilp climbed up to the top of a tall stool to write the note, and the small servant, carefully tutored for such emergencies, looked on, with her eyes wide open, ready, if he so much as abstracted a wafer, to rush into the street and give the alarm to the police.

As Mr. Quilp folded his note (which was soon written: being a very short one) he encountered the gaze of the small servant. He looked at her long and earnestly.

"How are you?" said the dwarf, moistening a wafer with horrible grimaces.

The small servant, perhaps frightened by his looks, returned no audible reply; but it appeared, from the motion of her lips, that she was inwardly repeating the same form of expression concerning the note or message.

"Do they use you ill here? Is your mistress a Tartar?" said Quilp with a chuckle.

In reply to the last interrogation, the small servant, with a look of infinite cunning mingled with fear, screwed up her mouth very tight and round, and nodded violently.

Whether there was anything in the peculiar slyness of her action which fascinated Mr. Quilp, or anything in the expression of her features at the moment which attracted his attention for some other reason; or whether it merely occurred to him as a pleasant whim to stare the small servant out of countenance; certain it is, that he planted his elbows square and firmly on the desk, and, squeezing up his cheeks with his hands, looked at her fixedly.

"Where do you come from?" he said after a long pause, stroking his chin.

"I don't know."

"What's your name?"

"Nothing."

"Nonsense!" retorted Quilp. "What does your mistress call you when she wants you?"

"A little devil," said the child.

She added in the same breath, as if fearful of any further questioning, "But please will you leave a card or message?"

These unusual answers might naturally have provoked some more inquiries. Quilp, however, without uttering another word, withdrew his eyes from the small servant, stroked his chin more thoughtfully than before, and then, bending over the note as if to direct it with scrupulous and hair-breadth nicety, looked at her, covertly but very narrowly, from under his bushy eyebrows. The result of this secret survey was that he shaded his face with his hands, and laughed slyly and noiselessly, until every vein in it was swollen almost to bursting. Pulling his hat over his brow to conceal his mirth and its effects, he tossed the letter to the child, and hastily withdrew.

Once in the street, moved by some secret impulse, he laughed, and held his sides, and laughed again, and tried to peer through the dusty area railings, as if to catch another glimpse of the child, until he was quite tired out. At last he travelled back to the Wilderness, which was within rifle-shot of his bachelor retreat, and ordered tea in the wooden summer-house that afternoon for three persons; an invitation to Miss Sally Brass and her brother to partake of that entertainment at that place having been the object both of his journey and his note.

It was not precisely the kind of weather in which people usually take tea in summer-houses, far less in summer-houses in an advanced state of decay, and overlooking the slimy banks of a great river at low water. Nevertheless, it was in this choice retreat that Mr. Quilp ordered a cold collation to be prepared, and it was beneath its cracked and leaky roof that he, in due course of time, received Mr. Sampson and his sister Sally.

"You're fond of the beauties of nature," said Quilp with a grin. "Is this charming, Brass? Is it unusual, unsophisticated, primitive?"

"It's delightful indeed, sir," replied the lawyer.

"Cool?" said Quilp.

"N-not particularly so, I think, sir," rejoined Brass, with his teeth chattering in his head.

"Perhaps a little damp and aguish?" said Quilp.

"Just damp enough to be cheerful, sir," rejoined Brass. "Nothing more, sir, nothing more."

"And Sally?" said the delighted dwarf. "Does *she* like it?"

"She'll like it better," returned that strong-minded lady, "when she has tea: so let us have it, and don't bother."

"Sweet Sally!" cried Quilp, extending his arms as if about to embrace her. "Gentle, charming, overwhelming Sally."

"He's a very remarkable man indeed!" soliloquised Mr. Brass. "He's quite a Troubadour, you know; quite a Troubadour!"

These complimentary expressions were uttered in a somewhat absent and distracted manner; for the unfortunate lawyer, besides having a bad cold in his head, had got wet in coming, and would have willingly borne some pecuniary sacrifice if he could have shifted his present raw quarters to a warm room, and dried himself at a fire. Quilp, however,—who, beyond the gratification of his demon whims, owed Sampson some acknowledgment of the part he had played in the mourning scene of which he had been a hidden witness,—marked these symptoms of uneasiness with a delight past all expression, and derived from them a secret joy which the costliest banquet could never have afforded him.

It is worthy of remark too, as illustrating a little feature in the character of Miss Sally Brass, that, although on her own account she would have borne the discomforts of the Wilderness with a very ill grace, and would probably, indeed, have walked off before the tea appeared, she no sooner beheld the latent uneasiness and misery of her brother than she developed a grim satisfaction, and began to enjoy herself after her own manner. Though the wet came stealing through the roof and trickling down upon their heads, Miss Brass uttered no complaint, but presided over the tea equipage with imperturbable composure. While Mr. Quilp, in his uproarious hospitality, seated himself upon an empty beer-barrel, vaunted the place as the most beautiful and comfortable in the three kingdoms, and elevating his glass, drank to their next merry-meeting in that jovial spot; and Mr. Brass, with the rain plashing down into his teacup, made a dismal attempt to pluck up his spirits and appear at his ease; and Tom Scott, who was in waiting at the door under an old umbrella, exulted in his agonies, and bade fair to split his sides with laughing; while all this was passing, Miss Sally Brass, unmindful of the wet which dripped down upon her own feminine person and fair apparel, sat placidly behind the tea-board, erect and grizzly, contemplating the unhappiness of her brother with a mind at ease, and content in her amiable dis-

regard of self, to sit there all night, witnessing the torments which his avaricious and grovelling nature compelled him to endure and forbade him to resent. And this, it must be observed, or the illustration would be incomplete, although in a business point of view she had the strongest sympathy with Mr. Sampson, and would have been beyond measure indignant if he had thwarted their client in any one respect.

In the height of his boisterous merriment, Mr. Quilp, having on some pretence dismissed his attendant sprite for the moment, resumed his usual manner all at once, dismounted from his cask, and laid his hand upon the lawyer's sleeve.

"A word," said the dwarf, "before we go farther. Sally, hørkee for a minute."

Miss Sally drew closer, as if accustomed to business conferences with their host which were the better for not having air.

"Business," said the dwarf, glancing from brother to sister. "Very private business. Lay your heads together when you're by yourselves."

"Certainly, sir," returned Brass, taking out his pocket-book and pencil. "I'll take down the heads if you please, sir. Remarkable documents," added the lawyer, raising his eyes to the ceiling, "most remarkable documents. He states his points so clearly that it's a treat to have 'em! I don't know any Act of Parliament that's equal to him in clearness."

"I shall deprive you of a treat," said Quilp. "Put up your book. We don't want any documents. So. There's a lad named Kit——"

Miss Sally nodded, implying that she knew of him.

"Kit!" said Mr. Sampson. "Kit! Ha! I've heard the name before, but I don't exactly call to mind—I don't exactly——"

"You're as slow as a tortoise, and more thick-headed than a rhinoceros," returned his obliging client with an impatient gesture.

"He's extremely pleasant!" cried the obsequious Sampson. "His acquaintance with Natural History, too, is surprising. Quite a Buffon, quite!"

There is no doubt that Mr. Brass intended some compliment or other; and it has been argued, with show of reason, that he would have said Buffon, but made use of a superfluous vowel. Be this as it may, Quilp gave him no time for correction, as he performed that office himself by more than tapping him on the head with the handle of his umbrella.

"Don't let's have any wrangling," said Miss Sally, staying his hand. "I've showed you that I know him, and that's enough."



"She's always foremost!" said the dwarf, patting her on the back and looking contemptuously at Sampson. "I don't like Kit, Sally."

"Nor I," rejoined Miss Brass.

"Nor I," said Sampson.

"Why, that's right!" cried Quilp. "Half our work is done already. This Kit is one of your honest people; one of your fair characters; a prowling, prying hound; a hypocrite; a

double-faced, white-livered, sneaking spy; a crouching cur to those that feed and coax him, and a barking, yelping dog to all besides."

"Fearfully eloquent!" cried Brass with a sneeze. "Quite appalling!"

"Come to the point," said Miss Sally, "and don't talk so much."

"Right again!" exclaimed Quilp with another contemptuous look at Sampson; "always foremost! I say, Sally, he is a yelping, insolent



"ELEVATING HIS GLASS, DRANK TO THEIR NEXT MERRY-MEETING IN THAT JOVIAL SPOT."

dog to all besides, and most of all to me. In short, I owe him a grudge."

"That's enough, sir," said Sampson.

"No, it's not enough, sir," sneered Quilp. "Will you hear me out? Besides that I owe him a grudge on that account, he thwarts me at this minute, and stands between me and an end which might otherwise prove a golden one to us all. Apart from that, I repeat that he crosses my humour, and I hate him. Now, you know the lad, and can guess the rest. Devise your

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own means of putting him out of my way, and execute them. Shall it be done?"

"It shall, sir," said Sampson.

"Then give me your hand," retorted Quilp. "Sally, girl, yours. I rely as much, or more, on you than him. Tom Scott comes back. Lantern, pipes, more grog, and a jolly night of it!"

No other word was spoken, no other look exchanged, which had the slightest reference to this, the real occasion of their meeting. The

trio were well accustomed to act together, and were linked to each other by ties of mutual interest and advantage, and nothing more was needed. Resuming his boisterous manner with the same ease with which he had thrown it off, Quilp was in an instant the same uproarious, reckless little savage he had been a few seconds before. It was ten o'clock at night before the amiable Sally supported her beloved and loving brother from the Wilderness, by which time he needed the utmost support her tender frame could render; his walk being, for some unknown reason, anything but steady, and his legs constantly doubling up in unexpected places.

Overpowered, notwithstanding his late prolonged slumbers, by the fatigues of the last few days, the dwarf lost no time in creeping to his dainty house, and was soon dreaming in his hammock. Leaving him to visions, in which, perhaps, the quiet figures we quitted in the old church porch were not without their share, be it our task to rejoin them as they sat and watched.

## CHAPTER LII.

**A**FTER a long time, the schoolmaster appeared at the wicket-gate of the churchyard, and hurried towards them, jingling in his hand, as he came along, a bundle of rusty keys. He was quite breathless with pleasure and haste when he reached the porch, and at first could only point towards the old building which the child had been contemplating so earnestly.

"You see those two old houses?" he said at last.

"Yes, surely," replied Nell. "I have been looking at them nearly all the time you have been away."

"And you would have looked at them more curiously yet, if you could have guessed what I have to tell you," said her friend. "One of those houses is mine."

Without saying any more, or giving the child time to reply, the schoolmaster took her hand, and, his honest face quite radiant with exultation, led her to the place of which he spoke.

They stopped before its low arched door. After trying several of the keys in vain, the schoolmaster found one to fit the huge lock, which turned back, creaking, and admitted them into the house.

The room into which they entered was a vaulted chamber, once nobly ornamented by

cunning architects, and still retaining, in its beautiful groined roof and rich stone tracery, choice remnants of its ancient splendour. Foliage carved in the stone, and emulating the mastery of Nature's hand, yet remained to tell how many times the leaves outside had come and gone, while it lived on unchanged. The broken figures supporting the burden of the chimney-piece, though mutilated, were still distinguishable for what they had been—far different from the dust without—and showed sadly by the empty hearth, like creatures who had outlived their kind, and mourned their own too slow decay.

In some old time—for even change was old in that old place—a wooden partition had been constructed in one part of the chamber to form a sleeping-closet, into which the light was admitted at the same period by a rude window, or rather niche, cut in the solid wall. This screen, together with two seats in the broad chimney, had at some forgotten date been part of the church or convent; for the oak, hastily appropriated to its present purpose, had been little altered from its former shape, and presented to the eye a pile of fragments of rich carving from old monkish stalls.

An open door leading to a small room or cell, dim with the light that came through leaves of ivy, completed the interior of this portion of the ruin. It was not quite destitute of furniture. A few strange chairs, whose arms and legs looked as though they had dwindled away with age; a table, the very spectre of its race; a great old chest that had once held records in the church, with other quaintly-fashioned domestic necessaries, and store of fire-wood for the winter, were scattered around, and gave evident tokens of its occupation as a dwelling-place at no very distant time.

The child looked around her with that solemn feeling with which we contemplate the work of ages that have become but drops of water in the great ocean of eternity. The old man had followed them, but they were all three hushed for a space, and drew their breath softly, as if they feared to break the silence even by so slight a sound.

"It is a very beautiful place!" said the child in a low voice.

"I almost feared you thought otherwise," returned the schoolmaster. "You shivered when we first came in, as if you felt it cold or gloomy."

"It was not that," said Nell, glancing round with a slight shudder. "Indeed, I cannot tell you what it was, but when I saw the outside, from the church porch, the same feeling came



over me. It is its being so old and grey, perhaps."

"A peaceful place to live in, don't you think so?" said her friend.

"Oh yes!" rejoined the child, clasping her hands earnestly. "A quiet, happy place—a place to live and learn to die in!" She would have said more, but that the energy of her thoughts caused her voice to falter, and come in trembling whispers from her lips.

"A place to live, and learn to live, and gather health of mind and body in," said the schoolmaster; "for this old house is yours."

"Ours!" cried the child.

"Ay," returned the schoolmaster gaily, "for many a merry year to come, I hope. I shall be a close neighbour—only next door—but this house is yours."

Having now disburdened himself of his great surprise, the schoolmaster sat down, and, drawing Nell to his side, told her how he had learnt that that ancient tenement had been occupied for a very long time by an old person, nearly a hundred years of age, who kept the keys of the church, opened and closed it for the services, and showed it to strangers; how she had died not many weeks ago, and nobody had yet been found to fill the office; how, learning all this in an interview with the sexton, who was confined to his bed by rheumatism, he had been bold to make mention of his fellow-traveller, which had been so favourably received by that high authority, that he had taken courage, acting on his advice, to propound the matter to the clergyman. In a word, the result of his exertions was, that Nell and her grandfather were to be carried before the last-named gentleman next day; and, his approval of their conduct and appearance reserved as a matter of form, that they were already appointed to the vacant post.

"There's a small allowance of money," said the schoolmaster. "It is not much, but still enough to live upon in this retired spot. By clubbing our funds together, we shall do bravely; no fear of that."

"Heaven bless and prosper you!" sobbed the child.

"Amen, my dear," returned her friend cheerfully; "and all of us, as it will, and has, in leading us through sorrow and trouble to this tranquil life. But we must look at *my* house now. Come!"

They repaired to the other tenement; tried the rusty keys as before; at length found the right one; and opened the worm-eaten door. It led into a chamber, vaulted and old, like that from which they had come, but not so

spacious, and having only one other little room attached. It was not difficult to divine that the other house was of right the schoolmaster's, and that he had chosen for himself the least commodious, in his care and regard for them. Like the adjoining habitation, it held such old articles of furniture as were absolutely necessary, and had its stack of fire-wood.

To make these dwellings as habitable and full of comfort as they could was now their pleasant care. In a short time each had its cheerful fire glowing and crackling on the hearth, and reddening the pale old walls with a hale and healthy blush. Nell, busily plying her needle, repaired the tattered window-hangings, drew together the rents that time had worn in the threadbare scraps of carpet, and made them whole and decent. The schoolmaster swept and smoothed the ground before the door, trimmed the long grass, trained the ivy and creeping plants, which hung their drooping heads in melancholy neglect; and gave to the outer walls a cheery air of home. The old man, sometimes by his side and sometimes with the child, lent his aid to both, went here and there on little patient services, and was happy. Neighbours too, as they came from work, proffered their help; or sent their children with such small presents or loans as the strangers needed most. It was a busy day; and night came on, and found them wondering that there was yet so much to do, and that it should be dark so soon.

They took their supper together in the house which may be henceforth called the child's; and, when they had finished their meal, drew round the fire, and almost in whispers—their hearts were too quiet and glad for loud expression—discussed their future plans. Before they separated, the schoolmaster read some prayers aloud; and then, full of gratitude and happiness, they parted for the night.

At that silent hour, when her grandfather was sleeping peacefully in his bed, and every sound was hushed, the child lingered before the dying embers, and thought of her past fortunes as if they had been a dream, and she only now awoke. The glare of the sinking flame, reflected in the oaken panels whose carved tops were dimly seen in the gloom of the dusky roof—the aged walls, where strange shadows came and went with every flickering of the fire—the solemn presence, within, of that decay which falls on senseless things the most enduring in their nature; and, without, and round about on every side, of Death—filled her with deep and thoughtful feelings, but with none of terror or alarm.

A change had been gradually stealing over her in the time of her loneliness and sorrow. With failing strength and heightening resolution, there had sprung up a purified and altered mind; there had grown in her bosom blessed thoughts and hopes, which are the portion of few but the weak and drooping. There were none to see the frail, perishable figure, as it glided from the fire and leaned pensively at the open casement; none but the stars to look into the upturned face and read its history. The old church bell rang out the hour with a mournful sound, as if it had grown sad from so much communing with the dead and unheeded warning to the living; the fallen leaves rustled; the grass stirred upon the graves; all else was still and sleeping.

Some of those dreamless sleepers lay close within the shadow of the church—touching the wall, as if they clung to it for comfort and protection. Others had chosen to lie beneath the changing shade of trees; others, by the path, that footsteps might come near them; others, among the graves of little children. Some had desired to rest beneath the very ground they had trodden in their daily walks; some, where the setting sun might shine upon their beds; some, where its light would fall upon them when it rose. Perhaps not one of the unprisoned souls had been able quite to separate itself in living thought from its old companion. If any had, it had still felt for it a love like that which captives have been known to bear towards the cell in which they have been long confined, and, even at parting, hung upon its narrow bounds affectionately.

It was long before the child closed the window, and approached her bed. Again something of the same sensation as before—an involuntary chill—a momentary feeling akin to fear—but vanishing directly, and leaving no alarm behind. Again, too, dreams of the little scholar; of the roof opening, and a column of bright faces, rising far away into the sky, as she had seen in some old scriptural picture once, and looking down on her, asleep. It was a sweet and happy dream. The quiet spot, outside, seemed to remain the same, save that there was music in the air, and a sound of angels' wings. After a time the sisters came there, hand-in-hand, and stood among the graves. And then the dream grew dim, and faded.

With the brightness and joy of morning came the renewal of yesterday's labours, the revival of its pleasant thoughts, the restoration of its energies, cheerfulness, and hope. They worked gaily in ordering and arranging their houses until noon, and then went to visit the clergyman.

He was a simple-hearted old gentleman, of a shrinking, subdued spirit, accustomed to retirement, and very little acquainted with the world, which he had left many years before to come and settle in that place. His wife had died in the house in which he still lived, and he had long since lost sight of any earthly cares or hopes beyond it.

He received them very kindly, and at once showed an interest in Nell; asking her name and age, her birthplace, the circumstances which had led her there, and so forth. The schoolmaster had already told her story. They had no other friends or home to leave, he said, and had come to share his fortunes. He loved the child as though she were his own.

"Well, well," said the clergyman. "Let it be as you desire. She is very young."

"Old in adversity and trial, sir," replied the schoolmaster.

"God help her! Let her rest, and forget them," said the old gentleman. "But an old church is a dull and gloomy place for one so young as you, my child."

"Oh no, sir!" returned Nell. "I have no such thoughts, indeed."

"I would rather see her dancing on the green at nights," said the old gentleman, laying his hand upon her head, and smiling sadly, "than have her sitting in the shadow of our mouldering arches. You must look to this, and see that her heart does not grow heavy among these solemn ruins. Your request is granted, friend."

After more kind words, they withdrew, and repaired to the child's house; where they were yet in conversation on their happy fortune, when another friend appeared.

This was the little old gentleman, who lived in the parsonage-house, and had resided there (so they learnt soon afterwards) ever since the death of the clergyman's wife, which had happened fifteen years before. He had been his college friend, and always his close companion; in the first shock of his grief he had come to console and comfort him; and from that time they had never parted company. The little old gentleman was the active spirit of the place, the adjuster of all differences, the promoter of all merry-makings, the dispenser of his friend's bounty, and of no small charity of his own besides; the universal mediator, comforter, and friend. None of the simple villagers had cared to ask his name, or, when they knew it, to store it in their memory. Perhaps from some vague rumour of his college honours which had been whispered abroad on his first arrival, perhaps because he was an unmarried, unencumbered



gentleman, he had been called the Bachelor. The name pleased him, or suited him as well as any other, and the bachelor he had ever since remained. And the bachelor it was, it may be added, who with his own hands had laid in the stock of fuel which the wanderers had found in their new habitations.

The bachelor, then—to call him by his usual appellation—lifted the latch, showed his little round mild face for a moment at the door, and stepped into the room like one who was no stranger to it.

“You are Mr. Marton, the new schoolmaster?” he said, greeting Nell’s kind friend.

“I am, sir.”

“You come well recommended, and I am glad to see you. I should have been in the way yesterday, expecting you, but I rode across the country to carry a message from a sick mother to her daughter in service some miles off, and have but just now returned. This is our young church-keeper? You are not the less welcome, friend, for her sake, or for this old man’s; nor the worse teacher for having learnt humanity.”

“She has been ill, sir, very lately,” said the schoolmaster, in answer to the look with which their visitor regarded Nell when he had kissed her cheek.

“Yes, yes. I know she has,” he rejoined. “There have been suffering and heartache here.”

“Indeed there have, sir.”

The little old gentleman glanced at the grandfather, and back again at the child, whose hand he took tenderly in his, and held.

“You will be happier here,” he said; “we will try, at least, to make you so. You have made great improvements here already. Are they the work of your hands?”

“Yes, sir.”

“We may make some others—not better in themselves, but with better means, perhaps,” said the bachelor. “Let us see, now let us see.”

Nell accompanied him into the other little rooms, and over both the houses, in which he found various small comforts wanting, which he engaged to supply from a certain collection of odds and ends he had at home, and which must have been a very miscellaneous and extensive one, as it comprehended the most opposite articles imaginable. They all came, however, and came without loss of time; for the little old gentleman, disappearing for some five or ten minutes, presently returned, laden with old shelves, rugs, blankets, and other household gear, and followed by a boy bearing a similar load. These being cast on the floor in a promiscuous heap, yielded a

quantity of occupation in arranging, erecting, and putting away; the superintendence of which task evidently afforded the old gentleman extreme delight, and engaged him for some time with great briskness and activity. When nothing more was left to be done, he charged the boy to run off and bring his schoolmates to be marshalled before their new master, and solemnly reviewed.

“As good a set of fellows, Marton, as you’d wish to see,” he said, turning to the schoolmaster when the boy was gone; “but I don’t let ’em know I think so. That wouldn’t do at all.”

The messenger soon returned at the head of a long row of urchins, great and small, who, being confronted by the bachelor at the house-door, fell into various convulsions of politeness; clutching their hats and caps, squeezing them into the smallest possible dimensions, and making all manner of bows and scrapes, which the little old gentleman contemplated with excessive satisfaction, and expressed his approval of by a great many nods and smiles. Indeed, his approbation of the boys was by no means so scrupulously disguised as he had led the schoolmaster to suppose, inasmuch as it broke out in sundry loud whispers and confidential remarks which were perfectly audible to them every one.

“This first boy, schoolmaster,” said the bachelor, “is John Owen; a lad of good parts, sir, and frank, honest temper; but too thoughtless, too playful, too light-headed by far. That boy, my good sir, would break his neck with pleasure, and deprive his parents of their chief comfort—and between ourselves, when you come to see him at hare and hounds, taking the fence and ditch by the finger-post, and sliding down the face of the little quarry, you’ll never forget it. It’s beautiful!”

John Owen having been thus rebuked, and being in perfect possession of the speech aside, the bachelor singled out another boy.

“Now, look at that lad, sir,” said the bachelor. “You see that fellow? Richard Evans his name is, sir. An amazing boy to learn, blessed with a good memory, and a ready understanding, and moreover with a good voice and ear for psalm-singing, in which he is the best among us. Yet, sir, that boy will come to a bad end; he’ll never die in his bed; he’s always falling asleep in church in sermon-time—and, to tell you the truth, Mr. Marton, I always did the same at his age, and feel quite certain that it was natural to my constitution, and I couldn’t help it.”

This hopeful pupil edified by the above terrible reproval, the bachelor turned to another.

"But if we talk of examples to be shunned," said he, "if we come to boys that should be a warning and a beacon to all their fellows, here's the one, and I hope you won't spare him. This is the lad, sir; this one with the blue eyes and light hair. This is a swimmer, sir, this fellow—a diver, Lord save us! This is a boy, sir, who had a fancy for plunging into eighteen feet of water, with his clothes on, and bringing up a blind man's dog, who was being drowned by the weight of his chain and collar, while his master stood wringing his hands upon the bank, bewailing the loss of his guide and friend. I sent the boy two guineas anonymously, sir," added the bachelor in his peculiar whisper, "directly I heard of it; but never mention it on any account, for he hasn't the least idea that it came from me."

Having disposed of this culprit, the bachelor turned to another, and from him to another, and so on through the whole array, laying, for their wholesome restriction within due bounds, the same cutting emphasis on such of their propensities as were dearest to his heart, and were unquestionably referable to his own precept and example. Thoroughly persuaded, in the end, that he had made them miserable by his severity, he dismissed them with a small present, and an admonition to walk quietly home, without any leapings, scufflings, or turnings out of the way: which injunction (he informed the schoolmaster in the same audible confidence) he did not think he could have obeyed when he was a boy, had his life depended on it.

Hailing these little tokens of the bachelor's disposition as so many assurances of his own welcome course from that time, the schoolmaster parted from him with a light heart and joyous spirits, and deemed himself one of the happiest men on earth. The windows of the two old houses were ruddy again, that night, with the reflection of the cheerful fires that burnt within; and the bachelor and his friend, pausing to look upon them as they returned from their evening walk, spoke softly together of the beautiful child, and looked round upon the churchyard with a sigh.

### CHAPTER LIII.

NELL was stirring early in the morning, and having discharged her household tasks, and put everything in order for the good schoolmaster (though sorely against his will, for he would have spared her the pains), took

down, from its nail by the fireside, a little bundle of keys with which the bachelor had formally invested her on the previous day, and went out alone to visit the old church.

The sky was serene and bright, the air clear, perfumed with the fresh scent of newly-fallen leaves, and grateful to every sense. The neighbouring stream sparkled, and rolled onward with a tuneful sound; the dew glistened on the green mounds, like tears shed by Good Spirits over the dead.

Some young children sported among the tombs, and hid from each other, with laughing faces. They had an infant with them, and had laid it down asleep upon a child's grave, in a little bed of leaves. It was a new grave—the resting-place, perhaps, of some little creature, who, meek and patient in its illness, had often sat and watched them, and now seemed, to their minds, scarcely changed.

She drew near, and asked one of them whose grave it was. The child answered that that was not its name; it was a garden—his brother's. It was greener, he said, than all the other gardens, and the birds loved it better because he had been used to feed them. When he had done speaking, he looked at her with a smile, and kneeling down and nestling for a moment with his cheek against the turf, bounded merrily away.

She passed the church, gazing upward at its old tower, went through the wicket-gate, and so into the village. The old sexton, leaning on a crutch, was taking the air at his cottage door, and gave her good morrow.

"You are better?" said the child, stopping to speak to him.

"Ay, surely," returned the old man. "I'm thankful to say, much better."

"You will be quite well-soon."

"With Heaven's leave, and a little patience. But come in, come in!"

The old man limped on before, and warning her of the downward step, which he achieved himself with no small difficulty, led the way into his little cottage.

"It is but one room, you see. There is another up above, but the stair has got harder to climb o' late years, and I never use it. I'm thinking of taking to it again next summer, though."

The child wondered how a grey-headed man like him—one of his trade too—could talk of time so easily. He saw her eyes wandering to the tools that hung upon the wall, and smiled.

"I warrant now," he said, "that you think all those are used in making graves."



"Indeed, I wondered that you wanted so many."

"And well you might. I am a gardener. I dig the ground, and plant things that are to live and grow. My works don't all moulder away, and rot in the earth. You see that spade in the centre?"

"The very old one—so notched and worn? Yes."

"That's the sexton's spade, and it's a well-used one, as you see. We're healthy people here, but it has done a power of work. If it could speak now, that spade, it would tell you of many an unexpected job that it and I have done together; but I forget 'em, for my memory's a poor one.—That's nothing new," he added hastily. "It always was."

"There are flowers and shrubs to speak to your other work," said the child.

"Oh yes! And tall trees. But they are not so separated from the sexton's labours as you think."

"No!"

"Not in my mind, and recollection—such as it is," said the old man. "Indeed, they often help it. For say that I planted such a tree for such a man. There it stands, to remind me that he died. When I look at its broad shadow, and remember what it was in his time, it helps me to the age of my other work, and I can tell you pretty nearly when I made his grave."

"But it may remind you of one who is still alive," said the child.

"Of twenty that are dead, in connection with that one who lives, then," rejoined the old man; "wife, husband, parents, brothers, sisters, children, friends—a score at least. So it happens that the sexton's spade gets worn and battered. I shall need a new one—next summer."

The child looked quickly towards him, thinking that he jested with his age and infirmity: but the unconscious sexton was quite in earnest.

"Ah!" he said after a brief silence. "People never learn. They never learn. It's only we who turn up the ground, where nothing grows and everything decays, who think of such things as these—who think of them properly, I mean. You have been into the church?"

"I am going there now," the child replied.

"There's an old well there," said the sexton, "right underneath the belfry; a deep, dark, echoing well. Forty year ago you had only to let down the bucket till the first knot in the rope was free of the windlass, and you heard it splashing in the cold dull water. By little and little the water fell away, so that, in ten year after that, a second knot was made, and you must

unwind so much rope, or the bucket swung light and empty at the end. In ten years' time the water fell again, and a third knot was made. In ten year more, the well dried up; and now, if you lower the bucket till your arms are tired and let out nearly all the cord, you'll hear it of a sudden clanking and rattling on the ground below; with a sound of being so deep and so far down, that your heart leaps into your mouth, and you start away as if you were falling in."

"A dreadful place to come on in the dark!" exclaimed the child, who had followed the old man's looks and words until she seemed to stand upon its brink.

"What is it but a grave?" said the sexton. "What else? And which of our old folks, knowing all this, thought, as the spring subsided, of their own failing strength and lessening life? Not one!"

"Are you very old yourself?" asked the child involuntarily.

"I shall be seventy-nine—next summer."

"You still work when you are well?"

"Work! To be sure. You shall see my gardens hereabout. Look at the window there. I made, and have kept, that plot of ground entirely with my own hands. By this time next year I shall hardly see the sky, the boughs will have grown so thick. I have my winter work at night besides."

He opened, as he spoke, a cupboard close to where he sat, and produced some miniature boxes, carved in a homely manner, and made of old wood.

"Some gentlefolks who are fond of ancient days, and what belongs to them," he said, "like to buy these keepsakes from our church and ruins. Sometimes I make them of scraps of oak that turn up here and there; sometimes of bits of coffins which the vaults have long preserved. See here—this is a little chest of the last kind, clasped at the edges with fragments of brass plates that had writing on 'em once, though it would be hard to read it now. I haven't many by me at this time of year, but these shelves will be full—next summer."

The child admired and praised his work, and shortly afterwards departed; thinking, as she went, how strange it was that this old man, drawing from his pursuits, and everything around him, one stern moral, never contemplated its application to himself; and, while he dwelt upon the uncertainty of human life, seemed both in word and deed to deem himself immortal. But her musings did not stop here, for she was wise enough to think that by a good and merciful adjustment this must be human nature, and that

the old sexton, with his plans for next summer, was but a type of all mankind.

Full of these meditations, she reached the church. It was easy to find the key belonging to the outer door, for each was labelled on a scrap of yellow parchment. Its very turning in the lock awoke a hollow sound, and, when she entered with a faltering step, the echoes that it raised in closing made her start.

If the peace of the simple village had moved the child more strongly because of the dark and troubled ways that lay beyond, and through which she had journeyed with such failing feet, what was the deep impression of finding herself alone in that solemn building, where the very light, coming through sunken windows, seemed old and grey, and the air, redolent of earth and mould, seemed laden with decay, purified by time of all its grosser particles, and sighing through arch and aisle, and clustered pillars, like the breath of ages gone! Here was the broken pavement, worn, so long ago, by pious feet, that Time, stealing on the pilgrims' steps, had trodden out their track, and left but crumbling stones. Here were the rotten beam, the sinking arch, the sapped and mouldering wall, the lowly trench of earth, the stately tomb on which no epitaph remained,—all—marble, stone, iron, wood, and dust—one common monument of ruin. The best work and the worst, the plainest and the richest, the stateliest and the least imposing—both of Heaven's work and Man's—all found one common level here, and told one common tale.

Some part of the edifice had been a baronial chapel, and here were effigies of warriors, stretched upon their beds of stone with folded hands—cross-legged, those who had fought in the Holy Wars—girded with their swords, and cased in armour as they had lived. Some of these knights had their own weapons, helmets, coats of mail, hanging upon the walls hard by, and dangling from rusty hooks. Broken and dilapidated as they were, they yet retained their ancient form, and something of their ancient aspect. Thus violent deeds live after men upon the earth, and traces of war and bloodshed will survive in mournful shapes, long after those who worked the desolation are but atoms of earth themselves.

The child sat down, in this old, silent place, among the stark figures on the tombs—they made it more quiet there than elsewhere, to her fancy—and gazing round with a feeling of awe, tempered with a calm delight, felt that now she was happy, and at rest. She took a Bible from the shelf, and read; then, laying it down,

thought of the summer days and the bright spring-time that would come—of the rays of sun that would fall in aslant upon the sleeping forms—of the leaves that would flutter at the window, and play in glistening shadows on the pavement—of the songs of birds, and growth of buds and blossoms out of doors—of the sweet air that would steal in, and gently wave the tattered banners overhead. What if the spot awakened thoughts of death? Die who would, it would still remain the same; these sights and sounds would still go on as happily as ever. It would be no pain to sleep amidst them.

She left the chapel—very slowly, and often turning back to gaze again—and coming to a low door, which plainly led into the tower, opened it, and climbed the winding stair in darkness; save where she looked down, through narrow loopholes, on the place she had left, or caught a glimmering vision of the dusty bells. At length she gained the end of the ascent, and stood upon the turret top.

Oh! the glory of the sudden burst of light; the freshness of the fields and woods, stretching away on every side, and meeting the bright blue sky; the cattle grazing in the pasture; the smoke that, coming from among the trees, seemed to rise upward from the green earth; the children yet at their gambols down below—all, everything, so beautiful and happy! It was like passing from death to life; it was drawing nearer Heaven.

The children were gone when she emerged into the porch and locked the door. As she passed the school-house she could hear the busy hum of voices. Her friend had begun his labours only that day. The noise grew louder, and, looking back, she saw the boys come trooping out and disperse themselves, with merry shouts and play. "It's a good thing," thought the child; "I am very glad they pass the church." And then she stopped to fancy how the noise would sound inside, and how gently it would seem to die away upon the ear.

Again that day, yes, twice again, she stole back to the old chapel, and in her former seat read from the same book, or indulged the same quiet train of thought. Even when it had grown dusk, and the shadows of coming night made it more solemn still, the child remained like one rooted to the spot, and had no fear or thought of stirring.

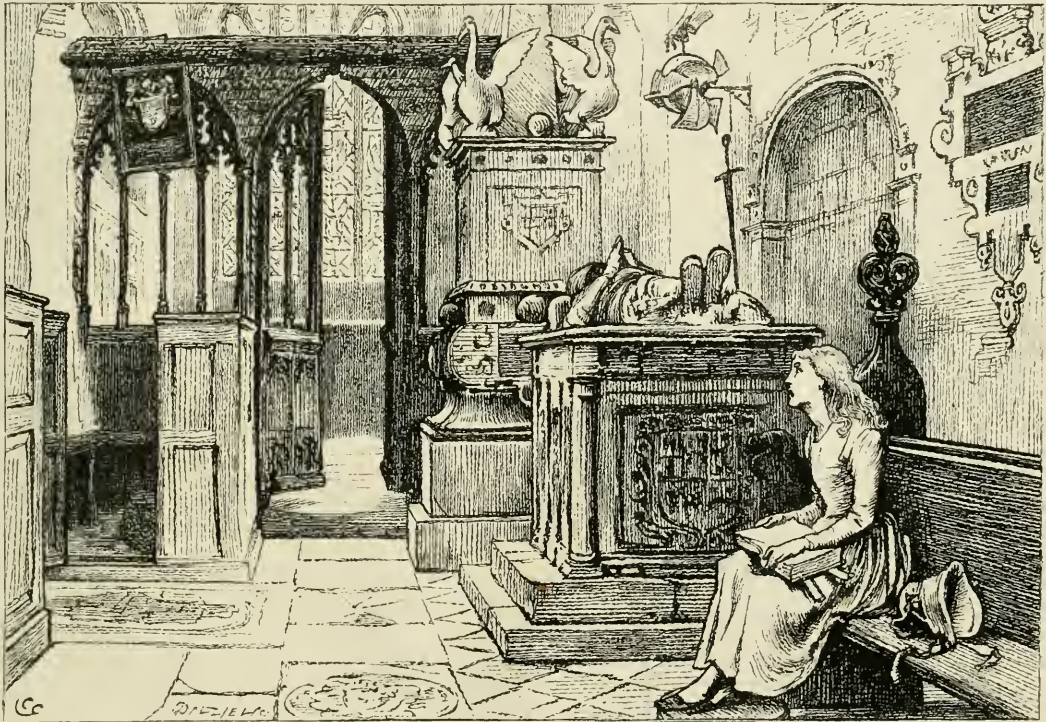
They found her there, at last, and took her home. She looked pale, but very happy, until they separated for the night; and then, as the poor schoolmaster stooped down to kiss her cheek, he thought he felt a tear upon his face.



## CHAPTER LIV.

**T**HE bachelor, among his various occupations, found in the old church a constant source of interest and amusement. Taking that pride in it which men conceive for the wonders of their own little world, he had made its history his study; and many a summer day within its walls, and many a winter's night beside the parsonage fire, had found the bachelor still poring over, and adding to, his goodly store of tale and legend.

As he was not one of those rough spirits who would strip fair Truth of every little shadowy vestment in which time and teeming fancies love to array her—and some of which become her pleasantly enough, serving, like the waters of her well, to add new graces to the charms they half conceal and half suggest, and to awaken interest and pursuit rather than languor and indifference—as, unlike this stern and obdurate class, he loved to see the goddess crowned with those garlands of wild flowers which tradition wreathes for her gentle wearing, and which are often freshest in their homeliest shapes,—he



"THE CHILD SAT DOWN IN THIS OLD, SILENT PLACE."

trod with a light step and bore with a light hand upon the dust of centuries, unwilling to demolish any of the airy shrines that had been raised above it, if any good feeling or affection of the human heart were hiding thereabouts. Thus, in the case of an ancient coffin of rough stone, supposed, for many generations, to contain the bones of a certain baron, who, after ravaging, with cut, and thrust, and plunder, in foreign lands, came back with a penitent and sorrowing heart to die at home, but which had been lately shown by learned antiquaries to be no such thing, as the baron in question (so they con-

tended) had died hard in battle, gnashing his teeth and cursing with his latest breath,—the bachelor stoutly maintained that the old tale was the true one; that the baron, repenting him of the evil, had done great charities and meekly given up the ghost; and that, if ever baron went to heaven, that baron was then at peace. In like manner, when the aforesaid antiquaries did argue and contend that a certain secret vault was not the tomb of a grey-haired lady who had been hanged and drawn and quartered by glorious Queen Bess for succouring a wretched priest who fainted of thirst and hunger at her

door. the bachelor did solemnly maintain, against all comers, that the church was hallowed by the said poor lady's ashes; that her remains had been collected in the night from four of the city's gates, and thither in secret brought, and there deposited; and the bachelor did further (being highly excited at such times) deny the glory of Queen Bess, and assert the immeasurably greater glory of the meanest woman in her realm, who had a merciful and tender heart. As to the assertion that the flat stone near the door was not the grave of the miser who had disowned his only child and left a sum of money to the church to buy a peal of bells, the bachelor did readily admit the same, and that the place had given birth to no such man. In a word, he would have had every stone and plate of brass the monument only of deeds whose memory should survive. All others he was willing to forget. They might be buried in consecrated ground, but he would have had them buried deep, and never brought to light again.

It was from the lips of such a tutor that the child learnt her easy task. Already impressed, beyond all telling, by the silent building and the peaceful beauty of the spot in which it stood—majestic age surrounded by perpetual youth—it seemed to her, when she heard these things, sacred to all goodness and virtue. It was another world, where sin and sorrow never came; a tranquil place of rest, where nothing evil entered.

When the bachelor had given her, in connection with almost every tomb and flat gravestone, some history of its own, he took her down into the old crypt, now a mere dull vault, and showed her how it had been lighted up in the time of the monks, and how, amid lamps depending from the roof, and swinging censers exhaling scented odours, and habits glittering with gold and silver, and pictures, and precious stuffs, and jewels all flashing and glistening through the low arches, the chant of aged voices had been many a time heard there, at midnight, in old days, while hooded figures knelt and prayed around, and told their rosaries of beads. Thence, he took her above-ground again, and showed her, high up in the old walls, small galleries, where the nuns had been wont to glide along—dimly seen in their dark dresses so far off—or to pause like gloomy shadows, listening to the prayers. He showed her, too, how the warriors, whose figures rested on the tombs, had worn those rotting scraps of armour up above—how this had been a helmet, and that a shield, and that a gauntlet—and how they had wielded the great two-handed swords, and beaten men down

with yonder iron mace. All that he told the child she treasured in her mind; and sometimes, when she awoke at night from dreams of those old times, and rising from her bed looked out at the dark church, she almost hoped to see the windows lighted up, and hear the organ's swell, and sound of voices on the rushing wind.

The old sexton soon got better, and was about again. From him the child learnt many other things, though of a different kind. He was not able to work, but one day there was a grave to be made, and he came to overlook the man who dug it. He was in a talkative mood; and the child, at first standing by his side, and afterwards sitting on the grass at his feet, with her thoughtful face raised towards his, began to converse with him.

Now, the man who did the sexton's duty was a little older than he, though much more active. But he was deaf; and when the sexton (who peradventure, on a pinch, might have walked a mile with great difficulty in half-a-dozen hours) exchanged a remark with him about his work, the child could not help noticing that he did so with an impatient kind of pity for his infirmity, as if he were himself the strongest and heartiest man alive.

"I'm sorry to see there is this to do," said the child when she approached. "I heard of no one having died."

"She lived in another hamlet, my dear," returned the sexton. "Three mile away."

"Was she young?"

"Ye—yes," said the sexton; "not more than sixty-four, I think. David, was she more than sixty-four?"

David, who was digging hard, heard nothing of the question. The sexton, as he could not reach to touch him with his crutch, and was too infirm to rise without assistance, called his attention by throwing a little mould upon his red nightcap.

"What's the matter now?" said David, looking up.

"How old was Becky Morgan?" asked the sexton.

"Becky Morgan?" repeated David.

"Yes," replied the sexton; adding, in a half-compassionate, half-irritable tone, which the old man couldn't hear, "You're getting very deaf, Davy, very deaf to be sure!"

The old man stopped in his work, and cleansing his spade with a piece of slate he had by him for the purpose—and scraping off, in the process, the essence of Heaven knows how many Becky Morgans—set himself to consider the subject.



"Let me think," quoth he. "I saw last night what they had put upon the coffin—was it seventy-nine?"

"No, no," said the sexton.

"Ah, yes, it was, though!" returned the old man with a sigh. "For I remember thinking she was very near our age. Yes, it was seventy-nine."

"Are you sure you didn't mistake a figure, Davy?" asked the sexton with signs of some emotion.

"What?" said the old man. "Say that again."

"He's very deaf. He's very deaf indeed," cried the sexton petulantly. "Are you sure you're right about the figures?"

"Oh, quite!" replied the old man. "Why not?"

"He's exceedingly deaf," muttered the sexton to himself. "I think he's getting foolish."

The child rather wondered what had led him to this belief, as, to say the truth, the old man seemed quite as sharp as he, and was infinitely more robust. As the sexton said nothing more just then, however, she forgot it for the time, and spoke again.

"You were telling me," she said, "about your gardening. Do you ever plant things here?"

"In the churchyard?" returned the sexton. "Not I."

"I have seen some flowers and little shrubs about," the child rejoined; "there are some over there, you see. I thought they were of your rearing, though indeed they grow but poorly."

"They grow as Heaven wills," said the old man; "and it kindly ordains that they shall never flourish here."

"I do not understand you."

"Why, this it is," said the sexton. "They mark the graves of those who had very tender, loving friends."

"I was sure they did!" the child exclaimed. "I am very glad to know they do!"

"Ay," returned the old man, "but stay. Look at them. See how they hang their heads, and droop, and wither! Do you guess the reason?"

"No," the child replied.

"Because the memory of those who lie below passes away so soon. At first they tend them morning, noon, and night; they soon begin to come less frequently; from once a day to once a week; from once a week to once a month; then, at long and uncertain intervals; then, not at all. Such tokens seldom flourish long. I have known the briefest summer flowers outlive them."

"I grieve to hear it," said the child.

"Ah! so say the gentlefolks who come down here to look about them," returned the old man, shaking his head, "but I say otherwise. 'It's a pretty custom you have in this part of the country,' they say to me sometimes, 'to plant the graves, but it's melancholy to see these things all withering or dead.' I crave their pardon, and tell them that, as I take it, 'tis a good sign for the happiness of the living. And so it is. It's nature."

"Perhaps the mourners learn to look to the blue sky by day, and to the stars by night, and to think that the dead are there, and not in graves," said the child in an earnest voice.

"Perhaps so," replied the old man doubtfully. "It may be."

"Whether it be as I believe it is, or no," thought the child within herself, "I'll make this place *my* garden. It will be no harm at least to work here day by day, and pleasant thoughts will come of it, I am sure."

Her glowing cheek and moistened eye passed unnoticed by the sexton, who turned towards old David, and called him by his name. It was plain that Becky Morgan's age still troubled him; though why, the child could scarcely understand.

The second or third repetition of his name attracted the old man's attention. Pausing from his work, he leant on his spade, and put his hand to his dull ear.

"Did you call?" he said.

"I have been thinking, Davy," replied the sexton, "that she," he pointed to the grave, "must have been a deal older than you or me."

"Seventy-nine," answered the old man with a shake of the head; "I tell you that I saw it."

"Saw it?" replied the sexton. "Ay, but, Davy, women don't always tell the truth about their age."

"That's true, indeed," said the other old man with a sudden sparkle in his eye. "She might have been older."

"I'm sure she must have been. Why, only think how old she looked. You and I seemed but boys to her."

"She did look old," rejoined David. "You're right. She did look old."

"Call to mind how old she looked for many a long, long year, and say if she could be but seventy-nine at last—only our age," said the sexton.

"Five year older at the very least!" cried the other.

"Five!" retorted the sexton. "Ten. Good eighty-nine. I call to mind the time her daughter died. She was eighty-nine if she was a day,

and tries to pass upon us now for ten year younger. Oh! human vanity!"

The other old man was not behindhand with some moral reflections on this fruitful theme, and both adduced a mass of evidence, of such weight as to render it doubtful—not whether the deceased was of the age suggested, but whether she had not almost reached the patriarchal term of a hundred. When they had settled this question to their mutual satisfaction, the sexton, with his friend's assistance, rose to go.

"It's chilly sitting here, and I must be careful—till the summer," he said as he prepared to limp away.

"What?" asked old David.

"He's very deaf, poor fellow!" cried the sexton. "Good-bye."

"Ah!" said old David, looking after him. "He's failing very fast. He ages every day."

And so they parted; each persuaded that the other had less life in him than himself; and both greatly consoled and comforted by the little fiction they had agreed upon respecting Becky Morgan, whose decease was no longer a precedent of uncomfortable application, and would be no business of theirs for half-a-score of years to come.

The child remained, for some minutes, watching the deaf old man as he threw out the earth with his shovel, and, often stopping to cough and fetch his breath, still muttered to himself, with a kind of sober chuckle, that the sexton was wearing fast. At length she turned away, and, walking thoughtfully through the churchyard, came unexpectedly upon the schoolmaster, who was sitting on a green grave in the sun, reading.

"Nell here?" he said cheerfully, as he closed his book. "It does me good to see you in the air and light. I feared you were again in the church, where you so often are."

"Feared!" replied the child, sitting down beside him. "Is it not a good place?"

"Yes, yes," said the schoolmaster. "But you must be gay sometimes. Nay, don't shake your head and smile so sadly."

"Not sadly, if you knew my heart. Do not look at me as if you thought me sorrowful. There is not a happier creature on the earth than I am now."

Full of grateful tenderness, the child took his hand, and folded it between her own. "It's God's will," she said, when they had been silent for some time.

"What?"

"All this," she rejoined; "all this about us.

But which of us is sad now? You see that I am smiling."

"And so am I," said the schoolmaster; "smiling to think how often we shall laugh in this same place. Were you not talking yonder?"

"Yes," the child rejoined.

"Of something that has made you sorrowful?"

There was a long pause.

"What was it?" said the schoolmaster tenderly. "Come. Tell me what it was."

"I rather grieve—I *do* rather grieve to think," said the child, bursting into tears, "that those who die about us are so soon forgotten."

"And do you think," said the schoolmaster, marking the glance she had thrown around, "that an unvisited grave, a withered tree, a faded flower or two, are tokens of forgetfulness or cold neglect? Do you think there are no deeds, far away from here, in which these dead may be best remembered? Nell, Nell, there may be people busy in the world, at this instant, in whose good actions and good thoughts these very graves—neglected as they look to us—are the chief instruments."

"Tell me no more," said the child quickly. "Tell me no more. I feel, I know it. How could I be unmindful of it, when I thought of you?"

"There is nothing," cried her friend, "no, nothing innocent or good, that dies, and is forgotten. Let us hold to that faith, or none. An infant, a prattling child, dying in its cradle, will live again in the better thoughts of those who loved it, and will play its part, through them, in the redeeming actions of the world, though its body be burnt to ashes or drowned in the deepest sea. There is not an angel added to the Host of Heaven but does its blessed work on earth in those that loved it here. Forgotten! Oh, if the good deeds of human creatures could be traced to their source, how beautiful would even death appear; for how much charity, mercy, and purified affection would be seen to have their growth in dusty graves!"

"Yes," said the child, "it is the truth. I know it is. Who should feel its force so much as I, in whom your little scholar lives again? Dear, dear, good friend, if you knew the comfort you have given me!"

The poor schoolmaster made her no answer, but bent over her in silence; for his heart was full.

They were yet seated in the same place, when the grandfather approached. Before they had spoken many words together, the church



clock struck the hour of school, and their friend withdrew.

"A good man," said the grandfather, looking after him; "a kind man. Surely *he* will never harm us, Nell. We are safe here, at last—eh? We will never go away from here?"

The child shook her head and smiled.

"She needs rest," said the old man, patting her cheek; "too pale—too pale. She is not like what she was."

"When?" asked the child.

"Ha!" said the old man, "to be sure—when? How many weeks ago? Could I count them on my fingers? Let them rest, though; they're better gone."

"Much better, dear," replied the child. "We will forget them; or, if we ever call them to mind, it shall be only as some uneasy dream that has passed away."

"Hush!" said the old man, motioning hastily to her with his hand, and looking over his shoulder; "no more talk of the dream, and all the miseries it brought. There are no dreams here. 'Tis a quiet place, and they keep away. Let us never think about them, lest they should pursue us again. Sunken eyes and hollow cheeks—wet, cold, and famine—and horrors before them all, that were even worse—we must forget such things if we would be tranquil here."

"Thank Heaven!" inwardly exclaimed the child, "for this most happy change!"

"I will be patient," said the old man, "humble, very thankful and obedient, if you will let me stay. But do not hide from me; do not steal away alone; let me keep beside you. Indeed, I will be very true and faithful, Nell."

"I steal away alone! Why, that," replied the child with assumed gaiety, "would be a pleasant jest indeed. See here, dear grandfather, we'll make this place our garden—why not? It is a very good one—and to-morrow we'll begin, and work together, side by side."

"It is a brave thought!" cried her grandfather. "Mind, darling—we begin to-morrow!"

Who so delighted as the old man when they next day began their labour? Who so unconscious of all associations connected with the spot as he? They plucked the long grass and nettles from the tombs, thinned the poor shrubs and roots, made the turf smooth, and cleared it of the leaves and weeds. They were yet in the ardour of their work, when the child, raising her head from the ground over which she bent, observed that the bachelor was sitting on the stile close by, watching them in silence.

"A kind office," said the little gentleman,

nodding to Nell as she curtsied to him. "Have you done all that this morning?"

"It is very little, sir," returned the child with downcast eyes, "to what we mean to do."

"Good work, good work," said the bachelor. "But do you only labour at the graves of children and young people?"

"We shall come to the others in good time, sir," replied Nell, turning her head aside, and speaking softly.

It was a slight incident, and might have been design, or accident, or the child's unconscious sympathy with youth. But it seemed to strike upon her grandfather, though he had not noticed it before. He looked in a hurried manner at the graves, then anxiously at the child, then pressed her to his side, and bade her stop to rest. Something he had long forgotten appeared to struggle faintly in his mind. It did not pass away, as weightier things had done; but came uppermost again, and yet again, and many times that day, and often afterwards. Once, while they were yet at work, the child, seeing that he often turned and looked uneasily at her, as though he were trying to resolve some painful doubts or collect some scattered thoughts, urged him to tell the reason. But he said it was nothing—nothing—and, laying her head upon his arm, patted her fair cheek with his hand and muttered that she grew stronger every day, and would be a woman soon.

## CHAPTER LV.

FROM that time there sprung up in the old man's mind a solicitude about the child which never slept or left him. There are chords in the human heart—strange, varying strings—which are only struck by accident; which will remain mute and senseless to appeals the most passionate and earnest, and respond at last to the slightest casual touch. In the most insensible or childish minds there is some train of reflection which art can seldom lead, or skill attest, but which will reveal itself, as great truths have done, by chance, and when the discoverer has the plainest and simplest end in view. From that time, the old man never, for a moment, forgot the weakness and devotion of the child; from the time of that slight incident, he, who had seen her toiling by his side through so much difficulty and suffering, and had scarcely thought of her otherwise than as the partner of miseries which he felt severely in

his own person, and deplored for his own sake at least as much as hers, awoke to a sense of what he owed her, and what those miseries had made her. Never, no, never once, in one unguarded moment from that time to the end, did any care for himself, any thought of his own comfort, any selfish consideration or regard, distract his thoughts from the gentle object of his love.

He would follow her up and down, waiting till she should tire and lean upon his arm—he would sit opposite to her in the chimney-corner, content to watch and look, until she raised her head and smiled upon him as of old—he would discharge by stealth those household duties which tasked her powers too heavily—he would rise, in the cold dark nights, to listen to her breathing in her sleep, and sometimes crouch for hours by her bedside only to touch her hand. He who knows all, can only know what hopes, and fears, and thoughts of deep affection, were in that one disordered brain, and what a change had fallen upon the poor old man.

Sometimes—weeks had crept on then—the child, exhausted, though with little fatigue, would pass whole evenings on a couch beside the fire. At such times the schoolmaster would bring in books, and read to her aloud; and seldom an evening passed but the bachelor came in, and took his turn of reading. The old man sat and listened,—with little understanding for the words, but with his eyes fixed upon the child,—and, if she smiled or brightened with the story, he would say it was a good one, and conceive a fondness for the very book. When, in their evening talk, the bachelor told some tale that pleased her (as his tales were sure to do), the old man would painfully try to store it in his mind; nay, when the bachelor left them, he would sometimes slip out after him, and humbly beg that he would tell him such a part again, that he might learn to win a smile from Nell.

But these were rare occasions, happily; for the child yearned to be out of doors, and walking in her solemn garden. Parties, too, would come to see the church; and those who came, speaking to others of the child, sent more; so even at that season of the year they had visitors almost daily. The old man would follow them at a little distance through the building, listening to the voice he loved so well; and when the strangers left, and parted from Nell, he would mingle with them to catch up fragments of their conversation; or he would stand for the same purpose, with his grey head uncovered, at the gate, as they passed through.

They always praised the child, her sense and

beauty, and he was proud to hear them. But what was that, so often added, which wrung his heart, and made him sob and weep alone in some dull corner? Alas! even careless strangers—they who had no feeling for her but the interest of the moment—they who would go away and forget next week that such a being lived—even they saw it—even they pitied her—even they bade him good day compassionately, and whispered as they passed.

The people of the village, too, of whom there was not one but grew to have a fondness for poor Nell; even among them there was the same feeling; a tenderness towards her—a compassionate regard for her, increasing every day. The very school-boys, light-hearted and thoughtless as they were, even they cared for her. The roughest among them was sorry if he missed her in the usual place upon his way to school, and would turn out of the path to ask for her at the latticed window. If she were sitting in the church, they perhaps might peep in softly at the open door; but they never spoke to her, unless she rose and went to speak to them. Some feeling was abroad which raised the child above them all.

So when Sunday came. They were all poor country-people in the church, for the castle in which the old family had lived was an empty ruin, and there were none but humble folks for seven miles around. There, as elsewhere, they had an interest in Nell. They would gather round her in the porch, before and after service; young children would cluster at her skirts; and aged men and women forsake their gossips, to give her kindly greeting. None of them, young or old, thought of passing the child without a friendly word. Many who came from three or four miles distant brought her little presents; the humblest and rudest had good wishes to bestow.

She had sought out the young children whom she first saw playing in the churchyard. One of these—he who had spoken of his brother—was her little favourite and friend, and often sat by her side in the church, or climbed with her to the tower-top. It was his delight to help her, or to fancy that he did so, and they soon became close companions.

It happened that, as she was reading in the old spot by herself one day, this child came running in with his eyes full of tears, and after holding her from him, and looking at her eagerly for a moment, clasped his little arms passionately about her neck.

“What now?” said Nell, soothing him. “What is the matter?”



"She is not one yet!" cried the boy, embracing her still more closely. "No, no. Not yet."

She looked at him wonderingly, and putting his hair back from his face, and kissing him, asked what he meant.

"You must not be one, dear Nell," cried the boy. "We can't see them. They never come to play with us, or talk to us. Be what you are. You are better so."

"I do not understand you," said the child. "Tell me what you mean."

"Why, they say," replied the boy, looking up into her face, "that you will be an Angel before the birds sing again. But you won't be, will you? Don't leave us, Nell, though the sky is bright. Do not leave us!"

The child dropped her head, and put her hands before her face.

"She cannot bear the thought!" cried the boy, exulting through his tears. "You will not go. You know how sorry we should be. Dear Nell, tell me that you'll stay amongst us. Oh! pray, pray tell me that you will!"

The little creature folded his hands, and knelt down at her feet.

"Only look at me, Nell," said the boy, "and tell me that you'll stop, and then I shall know that they are wrong, and will cry no more. Won't you say yes, Nell?"

Still the drooping head and hidden face, and the child quite silent—save for her sobs.

"After a time," pursued the boy, trying to draw away her hand, "the kind angels will be glad to think that you are not among them, and that you stayed here to be with us. Willy went away to join them; but, if he had known how I should miss him in our little bed at night, he never would have left me, I am sure."

Yet the child could make him no answer, and sobbed as though her heart were bursting.

"Why would you go, dear Nell? I know you would not be happy when you heard that we were crying for your loss. They say that Willy is in Heaven now, and that it's always summer there, and yet I'm sure he grieves when I lie down upon his garden bed, and he cannot turn to kiss me. But if you do go, Nell," said the boy, caressing her, and pressing his face to hers, "be fond of him for my sake. Tell him how I love him still, and how much I loved you; and when I think that you two are together, and are happy, I'll try to bear it, and never give you pain by doing wrong—indeed I never will!"

The child suffered him to move her hands, and put them round his neck. There was a tearful silence, but it was not long before she

looked upon him with a smile, and promised him, in a very gentle quiet voice, that she would stay and be his friend as long as Heaven would let her. He clapped his hands for joy, and thanked her many times; and, being charged to tell no person what had passed between them, gave her an earnest promise that he never would.

Nor did he, so far as the child could learn; but was her quiet companion in all her walks and musings, and never again adverted to the theme, which he felt had given her pain, although he was unconscious of its cause. Something of distrust lingered about him still; for he would often come, even in the dark evenings, and call in a timid voice outside the door to know if she were safe within; and being answered yes, and bade to enter, would take his station on a low stool at her feet, and sit there patiently until they came to seek and take him home. Sure as the morning came, it found him lingering near the house to ask if she were well; and, morning, noon, or night, go where she would, he would forsake his playmates and his sports to bear her company.

"And a good little friend he is, too," said the old sexton to her once. "When his elder brother died—elder seems a strange word, for he was only seven year old—I remember this one took it sorely to heart."

The child thought of what the schoolmaster had told her, and felt how its truth was shadowed out even in this infant.

"It has given him something of a quiet way, I think," said the old man, "though for that he is merry enough at times. I'd wager now that you and he have been listening by the old well."

"Indeed we have not," the child replied. "I have been afraid to go near it; for I am not often down in that part of the church, and do not know the ground."

"Come down with me," said the old man. "I have known it from a boy. Come!"

They descended the narrow steps which led into the crypt, and paused among the gloomy arches, in a dim and murky spot.

"This is the place," said the old man. "Give me your hand while you throw back the cover, lest you should stumble and fall in. I am too old—I mean rheumatic—to stoop myself."

"A black and dreadful place!" exclaimed the child.

"Look in," said the old man, pointing downward with his finger.

The child complied, and gazed down into the pit.

"It looks like a grave itself," said the old man.

"It does," replied the child.

"I have often had the fancy," said the sexton. "that it might have been dug at first to make the old place more gloomy, and the old monks more religious. It's to be closed up, and built over."

The child still stood looking thoughtfully into the vault.

"We shall see," said the sexton, "on what gay heads other earth will have closed when the light is shut out from here. God knows! They'll close it up next spring."

"The birds sing again in spring," thought the child as she leaned at her casement window, and gazed at the declining sun. "Spring! A beautiful and happy time!"

## CHAPTER LVI.

**A** DAY or two after the Quilp tea-party at the Wilderness, Mr. Swiveller walked into Sampson Brass's office at the usual hour, and, being alone in that Temple of Probity, placed his hat upon the desk, and taking from his pocket a small parcel of black crape, applied himself to folding and pinning the same upon it after the manner of a hat-band. Having completed the construction of this appendage, he surveyed his work with great complacency, and put his hat on again—very much over one eye, to increase the mournfulness of the effect. These arrangements perfected to his entire satisfaction, he thrust his hands into his pockets, and walked up and down the office with measured steps.

"It has always been the same with me," said Mr. Swiveller, "always. 'Twas ever thus, from childhood's hour I've seen my fondest hopes decay, I never loved a tree or flower but 'twas the first to fade away; I never nursed a dear Gazelle, to glad me with its soft black eye, but when it came to know me well, and love me, it was sure to marry a market gardener."

Overpowered by these reflections, Mr. Swiveller stopped short at the clients' chair, and flung himself into its open arms.

"And this," said Mr. Swiveller with a kind of bantering composure, "is life, I believe. Oh, certainly! Why not? I'm quite satisfied. I shall wear," added Richard, taking off his hat again, and looking hard at it, as if he were only deterred by pecuniary considerations from spurning it with his foot, "I shall wear this emblem

of woman's perfidy, in remembrance of her with whom I shall never again thread the windings of the mazy; whom I shall never more pledge in the rosy; who, during the short remainder of my existence, will murder the balmy. Ha, ha, ha!"

It may be necessary to observe, lest there should appear any incongruity in the close of this soliloquy, that Mr. Swiveller did not wind up with a cheerful hilarious laugh, which would have been undoubtedly at variance with his solemn reflections, but that, being in a theatrical mood, he merely achieved that performance which is designated in melodramas "laughing like a fiend,"—for it seems that your fiends always laugh in syllables, and always in three syllables, never more nor less, which is a remarkable property in such gentry, and one worthy of remembrance.

The baleful sounds had hardly died away, and Mr. Swiveller was still sitting in a very grim state in the clients' chair, when there came a ring—or, if we may adapt the sound to his then humour, a knell—at the office bell. Opening the door with all speed, he beheld the expressive countenance of Mr. Chuckster, between whom and himself a fraternal greeting ensued.

"You're devilish early at this pestiferous old slaughter-house," said that gentleman, poisoning himself on one leg, and shaking the other in an easy manner.

"Rather," returned Dick.

"Rather!" retorted Mr. Chuckster with that air of graceful trifling which so well became him. "I should think so. Why, my good feller, do you know what o'clock it is? Half-past nine A.M. in the morning."

"Won't you come in?" said Dick. "All alone. Swiveller solus. 'Tis now the witching—"

"Hour of night!"

"When churchyards yawn,"

"And graves give up their dead."

At the end of this quotation in dialogue, each gentleman struck an attitude, and, immediately subsiding into prose, walked into the office. Such morsels of enthusiasm were common among the Glorious Apollos, and were, indeed, the links that bound them together, and raised them above the cold dull earth.

"Well, and how are you, my buck?" said Mr. Chuckster, taking a stool. "I was forced to come into the City upon some little private matters of my own, and couldn't pass the corner of the street without looking in, but, upon my soul, I didn't expect to find you. It is so everlastingly early."



Mr. Swiveller expressed his acknowledgments; and it appearing, on further conversation, that he was in good health, and that Mr. Chuckster was in the like enviable condition, both gentlemen, in compliance with a solemn custom of the ancient Brotherhood to which they belonged, joined in a fragment of the popular duet of "All's Well," with a long shake at the end.

"And what's the news?" said Richard.

"The town's as flat, my dear feller," replied Mr. Chuckster, "as the surface of a Dutch oven. There's no news. By-the-bye, that lodger of yours is a most extraordinary person. He quite eludes the most vigorous comprehension, you know. Never was such a feller!"

"What has he been doing now?" said Dick.

"By Jove, sir," returned Mr. Chuckster, taking out an oblong snuff-box, the lid whereof was ornamented with a fox's head curiously carved in brass, "that man is an unfathomable. Sir, that man has made friends with our articulated clerk. There's no harm in him, but he is so amazingly slow and soft. Now, if he wanted a friend, why couldn't he have one that knew a thing or two, and could do him some good by his manners and conversation? I have my faults, sir——" said Mr. Chuckster.

"No, no," interposed Mr. Swiveller.

"Oh yes, I have! I have my faults; no man knows his faults better than I know mine. But," said Mr. Chuckster, "I'm not meek. My worst enemies—every man has his enemies, sir, and I have mine—never accused me of being meek. And I tell you what, sir, if I hadn't more of these qualities that commonly endear man to man than our articulated clerk has, I'd steal a Cheshire cheese, tie it round my neck, and drown myself. I'd die degraded, as I had lived. I would, upon my honour."

Mr. Chuckster paused, rapped the fox's head exactly on the nose with the knuckle of the forefinger, took a pinch of snuff, and looked steadily at Mr. Swiveller, as much as to say that if he thought he was going to sneeze, he would find himself mistaken.

"Not contented, sir," said Mr. Chuckster, "with making friends with Abel, he has cultivated the acquaintance of his father and mother. Since he came home from that wild-goose chase, he has been there—actually been there. He patronises young Snobby, besides; you'll find, sir, that he'll be constantly coming backwards and forwards to this place: yet I don't suppose that, beyond the common forms of civility, he has ever exchanged half-a-dozen words with *me*. Now, upon my soul, you know," said Mr. Chuckster, shaking his head gravely, as men are

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went to do when they consider things are going a little too far, "this is altogether such a low-minded affair, that if I didn't feel for the governor, and know that he could never get on without me, I should be obliged to cut the connection. I should have no alternative."

Mr. Swiveller, who sat on another stool opposite to his friend, stirred the fire in an excess of sympathy, but said nothing.

"As to young Snob, sir," pursued Mr. Chuckster with a prophetic look, "you'll find he'll turn out bad. In our profession we know something of human nature, and take my word for it, that the feller that came back to work out that shilling will show himself one of these days in his true colours. He's a low thief, sir. He must be."

Mr. Chuckster, being roused, would probably have pursued this subject further, and in more emphatic language, but for a tap at the door, which, seeming to announce the arrival of somebody on business, caused him to assume a greater appearance of meekness than was perhaps quite consistent with his late declaration. Mr. Swiveller, hearing the same sound, caused his stool to revolve rapidly on one leg until it brought him to his desk, into which, having forgotten in the sudden flurry of his spirits to part with the poker, he thrust it as he cried "Come in!"

Who should present himself but that very Kit who had been the theme of Mr. Chuckster's wrath? Never did man pluck up his courage so quickly, or look so fierce, as Mr. Chuckster when he found it was he. Mr. Swiveller stared at him for a moment, and then leaping from his stool, and drawing out the poker from its place of concealment, performed the broad-sword exercise, with all the cuts and guards complete, in a species of frenzy.

"Is the gentleman at home?" said Kit, rather astonished by this uncommon reception.

Before Mr. Swiveller could make any reply, Mr. Chuckster took occasion to enter his indignant protest against this form of inquiry; which he held to be of a disrespectful and snobbish tendency, inasmuch as the inquirer, seeing two gentlemen then and there present, should have spoken of the other gentleman; or rather (for it was not impossible that the object of his search might be of inferior quality), should have mentioned his name, leaving it to his hearers to determine his degree as they thought proper. Mr. Chuckster likewise remarked that he had some reason to believe this form of address was personal to himself, and that he was not a man to be trifled with—as certain snobs (whom he did

not more particularly mention or describe) might find to their cost.

"I mean the gentleman up-stairs," said Kit, turning to Richard Swiveller. "Is he at home?"

"Why?" rejoined Dick.

"Because, if he is, I have a letter for him."

"From whom?" said Dick.

"From Mr. Garland."

"Oh!" said Dick with extreme politeness.

"Then you may hand it over, sir. And, if you're to wait for an answer, sir, you may wait in the passage, sir, which is an airy and well-ventilated apartment, sir."

"Thank you," returned Kit. "But I am to give it to himself, if you please."

The excessive audacity of this retort so overpowered Mr. Chuckster, and so moved his tender regard for his friend's honour, that he declared, if he were not restrained by official considerations, he must certainly have annihilated Kit upon the spot; a resentment of the affront which he did consider, under the extraordinary circumstances of aggravation attending it, could not but have met with the proper sanction and approval of a jury of Englishmen, who, he had no doubt, would have returned a verdict of Justifiable Homicide, coupled with a high testimony to the morals and character of the Avenger. Mr. Swiveller, without being quite so hot upon the matter, was rather shamed by his friend's excitement, and not a little puzzled how to act (Kit being quite cool and good-humoured), when the single gentleman was heard to call violently down the stairs.

"Didn't I see somebody for me come in?" cried the lodger.

"Yes, sir," replied Dick. "Certainly, sir."

"Then where is he?" roared the single gentleman.

"He's here, sir," rejoined Mr. Swiveller.

"Now, young man, don't you hear you're to go up-stairs? Are you deaf?"

Kit did not appear to think it worth his while to enter into any altercation, but hurried off, and left the Glorious Apollos gazing at each other in silence.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Mr. Chuckster. "What do you think of that?"

Mr. Swiveller being in the main a good-natured fellow, and not perceiving in the conduct of Kit any villainy of enormous magnitude, scarcely knew what answer to return. He was relieved from his perplexity, however, by the entrance of Mr. Sampson and his sister Sally, at sight of whom Mr. Chuckster precipitately retired.

Mr. Brass and his lovely companion appeared

to have been holding a consultation, over their temperate breakfast, upon some matter of great interest and importance. On the occasion of such conferences, they generally appeared in the office some half an hour after their usual time, and in a very smiling state, as though their late plots and designs had tranquillised their minds, and shed a light upon their toilsome way. In the present instance they seemed particularly gay; Miss Sally's aspect being of a most oily kind, and Mr. Brass rubbing his hands in an exceedingly jocose and light-hearted manner.

"Well, Mr. Richard," said Brass, "how are we this morning? Are we pretty fresh and cheerful, sir—eh, Mr. Richard?"

"Pretty well, sir," replied Dick.

"That's well," said Brass. "Ha, ha! We should be as gay as larks, Mr. Richard—why not? It's a pleasant world we live in, sir, a very pleasant world. There are bad people in it, Mr. Richard; but, if there were no bad people, there would be no good lawyers. Ha, ha! Any letters by the post this morning, Mr. Richard?"

Mr. Swiveller answered in the negative.

"Ha!" said Brass, "no matter. If there's little business to-day, there'll be more to-morrow. A contented spirit, Mr. Richard, is the sweetness of existence. Anybody been here, sir?"

"Only my friend," replied Dick. "'May we ne'er want a——?'"

"Friend," Brass chimed in quickly, "'or a bottle to give him.' Ha, ha! That's the way the song runs, isn't it? A very good song, Mr. Richard, very good. I like the sentiment of it. Ha, ha! Your friend's the young man from Witherden's office I think—yes. 'May we ne'er want a——?' Nobody else at all been, Mr. Richard?"

"Only somebody to the lodger," replied Mr. Swiveller.

"Oh, indeed!" cried Brass. "Somebody to the lodger, eh? Ha, ha! 'May we ne'er want a friend, or a——?' Somebody to the lodger, eh, Mr. Richard?"

"Yes," said Dick, a little disconcerted by the excessive buoyancy of spirits which his employer displayed. "With him now."

"With him now!" cried Brass. "Ha, ha! There let 'em be merry and free, toor rul lol le. Eh, Mr. Richard? Ha, ha!"

"Oh, certainly!" replied Dick.

"And who," said Brass, shuffling among his papers, "who is the lodger's visitor—not a lady visitor I hope, eh, Mr. Richard? The morals of the Marks you know, sir—'when lovely woman stoops to folly'—and all that—eh, Mr. Richard?"



"Another young man who belongs to Witherden's too, or half belongs there," returned Richard. "Kit they call him."

"Kit, eh?" said Brass. "Strange name—name of a dancing-master's fiddle, eh, Mr. Richard? Ha, ha! Kit's there, is he? Oh!"

Dick looked at Miss Sally, wondering that she didn't check this uncommon exuberance on the part of Mr. Sampson; but as she made no attempt to do so, and rather appeared to exhibit a tacit acquiescence in it, he concluded that they had just been cheating somebody, and receiving the bill.

"Will you have the goodness, Mr. Richard," said Brass, taking a letter from his desk, "just to step over to Peckham Rye with that? There's no answer, but it's rather particular, and should go by hand. Charge the office with your coach hire back, you know; don't spare the office; get as much out of it as you can—clerk's motto—eh, Mr. Richard? Ha, ha!"

Mr. Swiveller solemnly doffed the aquatic jacket, put on his coat, took down his hat from its peg, pocketed the letter, and departed. As soon as he was gone, uprose Miss Sally Brass, and, smiling sweetly at her brother (who nodded and smote his nose in return), withdrew also.

Sampson Brass was no sooner left alone than he set the office door wide open, and establishing himself at his desk directly opposite, so that he could not fail to see anybody who came downstairs and passed out at the street-door, began to write with extreme cheerfulness and assiduity; humming as he did so, in a voice that was anything but musical, certain vocal snatches which appeared to have reference to the union between Church and State, inasmuch as they were compounded of the Evening Hymn and God save the King.

Thus, the attorney of Bevis Marks sat, and wrote, and hummed for a long time, except when he stopped to listen with a very cunning face, and, hearing nothing, went on humming louder, and writing slower than ever. At length, in one of these pauses, he heard his lodger's door open and shut, and footsteps coming down the stairs. Then, Mr. Brass left off writing entirely, and, with his pen in his hand, hummed his very loudest; shaking his head meanwhile from side to side, like a man whose whole soul was in the music, and smiling in a manner quite seraphic.

It was towards this moving spectacle that the staircase and the sweet sounds guided Kit: on whose arrival before his door, Mr. Brass stopped his singing, but not his smiling, and nodded

affably: at the same time beckoning to him with his pen.

"Kit," said Mr. Brass in the pleasantest way imaginable, "how do you do?"

Kit, being rather shy of his friend, made a suitable reply, and had his hand upon the lock of the street-door, when Mr. Brass called him softly back.

"You are not to go, if you please, Kit," said the attorney in a mysterious and business-like way. "You are to step in here, if you please. Dear me, dear me! When I look at you," said the lawyer, quitting his stool, and standing before the fire with his back towards it, "I am reminded of the sweetest little face that ever my eyes beheld. I remember your coming there, twice or thrice, when we were in possession. Ah, Kit, my dear fellow, gentlemen in my profession have such painful duties to perform sometimes, that you needn't envy us—you needn't indeed!"

"I don't, sir," said Kit, "though it isn't for the like of me to judge."

"Our only consolation, Kit," pursued the lawyer, looking at him in a sort of pensive abstraction, "is, that although we cannot turn away the wind, we can soften it; we can temper it, if I may say so, to the shorn lambs."

"Shorn indeed!" thought Kit. "Pretty close!" But he didn't say so.

"On that occasion, Kit," said Mr. Brass, "on that occasion that I have just alluded to, I had a hard battle with Mr. Quilp (for Mr. Quilp is a very hard man) to obtain them the indulgence they had. It might have cost me a client. But suffering virtue inspired me, and I prevailed." — "He's not so bad after all," thought honest Kit, as the attorney pursed up his lips and looked like a man who was struggling with his better feelings.

"I respect *you*, Kit," said Brass with emotion. "I saw enough of your conduct, at that time, to respect you, though your station is humble, and your fortune lowly. It isn't the waistcoat that I look at. It is the heart. The checks in the waistcoat are but the wires of the cage. But the heart is the bird. Ah! How many sich birds are perpetually moulting, and putting their beaks through the wires to peck at all mankind!"

This poetic figure, which Kit took to be in special allusion to his own checked waistcoat, quite overcame him; Mr. Brass's voice and manner added not a little to its effect, for he discoursed with all the mild austerity of a hermit, and wanted but a cord round the waist of his rusty surtout, and a skull on the chimney-

piece, to be completely set up in that line of business.

"Well, well," said Sampson, smiling as good men smile when they compassionate their own weakness or that of their fellow-creatures, "this is wide of the bull's-eye. You're to take that, if you please." As he spoke, he pointed to a couple of half-crowns on the desk.

Kit looked at the coins, and then at Sampson, and hesitated.

"For yourself," said Brass.

"From——"

"No matter about the person they came from," replied the lawyer. "Say me, if you like. We have eccentric friends overhead, Kit, and we mustn't ask questions or talk too much—you understand? You're to take them, that's all; and, between you and me, I don't think they'll be the last you'll have to take from the same place. I hope not. Good-bye, Kit. Good-bye!"

With many thanks, and many more self-reproaches for having on such slight grounds suspected one who in their very first conversation turned out such a different man from what he had supposed, Kit took the money and made the best of his way home. Mr. Brass remained airing himself at the fire, and resumed his vocal exercise, and his seraphic smile, simultaneously.

"May I come in?" said Miss Sally, peeping.

"Oh yes, you may come in!" returned her brother.

"Ahem?" coughed Miss Brass interrogatively.

"Why, yes," returned Sampson, "I should say as good as done."

## CHAPTER LVII.



**M**R. CHUCKSTER'S indignant apprehensions were not without foundation. Certainly the friendship between the single gentleman and Mr. Garland was not suffered to cool, but had a rapid growth and flourished exceedingly. They were soon in habits of constant intercourse and communication; and the single gentleman labouring at this time under a slight attack of illness—the consequence, most probably, of his late excited feelings and subsequent disappointment—furnished a reason for their holding yet more frequent correspondence; so that some one of the inmates of Abel Cottage, Finchley,

came backwards and forwards between that place and Bevis Marks almost every day.

As the pony had now thrown off all disguise, and, without any mincing of the matter or beating about the bush, sturdily refused to be driven by anybody but Kit, it generally happened that whether old Mr. Garland came, or Mr. Abel, Kit was of the party. Of all messages and inquiries, Kit was, in right of his position, the bearer; thus it came about that, while the single gentleman remained indisposed, Kit turned into Bevis Marks every morning with nearly as much regularity as the General Postman.

Mr. Sampson Brass, who no doubt had his reasons for looking sharply about him, soon learnt to distinguish the pony's trot and the clatter of the little chaise at the corner of the street. Whenever this sound reached his ears, he would immediately lay down his pen, and fall to rubbing his hands and exhibiting the greatest glee.

"Ha, ha!" he would cry. "Here's the pony again! Most remarkable pony, extremely docile, eh, Mr. Richard, eh, sir?"

Dick would return some matter-of-course reply, and Mr. Brass, standing on the bottom rail of his stool, so as to get a view of the street over the top of the window blind, would take an observation of the visitors.

"The old gentleman again!" he would exclaim; "a very prepossessing old gentleman, Mr. Richard—charming countenance, sir—extremely calm—benevolence in every feature, sir. He quite realises my idea of King Lear, as he appeared when in possession of his kingdom, Mr. Richard—the same good-humour, the same white hair and partial baldness, the same liability to be imposed upon. Ah! A sweet subject for contemplation, sir, very sweet!"

Then, Mr. Garland having alighted and gone up-stairs, Sampson would nod and smile to Kit from the window, and presently walk out into the street to greet him, when some such conversation as the following would ensue.

"Admirably groomed, Kit"—Mr. Brass is patting the pony—"does you great credit—amazingly sleek and bright to be sure. He literally looks as if he had been varnished all over."

Kit touches his hat, smiles, pats the pony himself, and expresses his conviction "that Mr. Brass will not find many like him."

"A beautiful animal indeed!" cries Brass. "Sagacious too?"

"Bless you!" replies Kit, "he knows what you say to him as well as a Christian does."

"Does he indeed?" cries Brass, who has



heard the same thing in the same place from the same person in the same words a dozen times, but is paralysed with astonishment notwithstanding. "Dear me!"

"I little thought, the first time I saw him, sir," says Kit, pleased with the attorney's strong interest in his favourite, "that I should come to be as intimate with him as I am now."

"Ah!" rejoins Mr. Brass, brimful of moral precepts and love of virtue. "A charming subject of reflection for you, very charming! A subject of proper pride and congratulation, Christopher. Honesty is the best policy.—I always find it so myself. I lost forty-seven pound ten by being honest this morning. But it's all gain, it's gain!"

Mr. Brass slyly tickles his nose with his pen, and looks at Kit with the water standing in his eyes. Kit thinks that, if ever there was a good man who belied his appearance, that man is Sampson Brass.

"A man," says Sampson, "who loses forty-seven pound ten in one morning by his honesty is a man to be envied. If it had been eighty pound, the luxuriousness of feeling would have been increased. Every pound lost would have been a hundredweight of happiness gained. The still small voice, Christopher," cries Brass, smiling, and tapping himself on the bosom, "is a singing comic songs within me, and all is happiness and joy!"

Kit is so improved by the conversation, and finds it go so completely home to his feelings, that he is considering what he shall say, when Mr. Garland appears. The old gentleman is helped into the chaise with great obsequiousness by Mr. Sampson Brass; and the pony, after shaking his head several times, and standing for three or four minutes with all his four legs planted firmly on the ground, as if he had made up his mind never to stir from that spot, but there to live and die, suddenly darts off, without the smallest notice, at the rate of twelve English miles an hour. Then, Mr. Brass and his sister (who has joined him at the door) exchange an odd kind of smile—not at all a pleasant one in its expression—and return to the society of Mr. Richard Swiveller, who, during their absence, has been regaling himself with various feats of pantomime, and is discovered at his desk, in a very flushed and heated condition, violently scratching out nothing with half a penknife.

Whenever Kit came alone, and without the chaise, it always happened that Sampson Brass was reminded of some mission, calling Mr. Swiveller, if not to Peckham Rye again, at all events to some pretty distant place from which

he could not be expected to return for two or three hours, or in all probability a much longer period, as that gentleman was not, to say the truth, renowned for using great expedition on such occasions, but rather for protracting and spinning out the time to the very utmost limit of possibility. Mr. Swiveller out of sight, Miss Sally immediately withdrew. Mr. Brass would then set the office door wide open, hum his old tune with great gaiety of heart, and smile seraphically as before. Kit, coming down-stairs, would be called in; entertained with some moral and agreeable conversation; perhaps entreated to mind the office for an instant while Mr. Brass stepped over the way; and afterwards presented with one or two half-crowns, as the case might be. This occurred so often, that Kit, nothing doubting but that they came from the single gentleman, who had already rewarded his mother with great liberality, could not enough admire his generosity; and bought so many cheap presents for her, and for little Jacob, and for the baby, and for Barbara to boot, that one or other of them was having some new trifle every day of their lives.

While these acts and deeds were in progress in and out of the office of Sampson Brass, Richard Swiveller, being often left alone therein, began to find the time hang heavy on his hands. For the better preservation of his cheerfulness, therefore, and to prevent his faculties from rusting, he provided himself with a cribbage-board and pack of cards, and accustomed himself to play at cribbage with a dummy, for twenty, thirty, or sometimes even fifty thousand pounds a side, besides many hazardous bets to a considerable amount.

As these games were very silently conducted, notwithstanding the magnitude of the interests involved, Mr. Swiveller began to think that on those evenings when Mr. and Miss Brass were out (and they often went out now) he heard a kind of snorting or hard-breathing sound in the direction of the door, which it occurred to him, after some reflection, must proceed from the small servant, who always had a cold from damp living. Looking intently that way one night, he plainly distinguished an eye gleaming and glistening at the keyhole; and, having now no doubt that his suspicions were correct, he stole softly to the door, and pounced upon her before she was aware of his approach.

"Oh! I didn't mean any harm indeed, upon my word I didn't," cried the small servant, struggling like a much larger one. "It's so very dull down-stairs. Please don't you tell upon me, please don't."

"Tell upon you!" said Dick. "Do you mean to say you were looking through the key-hole for company?"

"Yes, upon my word I was," replied the small servant.

"How long have you been cooling your eye there?" said Dick.

"Oh, ever since you first began to play them cards, and long before!"

Vague recollections of several fantastic exercises with which he had refreshed himself after the fatigues of business, and to all of which, no doubt, the small servant was a party, rather disconcerted Mr. Swiveller; but he was not very sensitive on such points, and recovered himself speedily.

"Well,—come in," he said after a little consideration. "Here—sit down, and I'll teach you how to play."

"Oh! I durstn't do it," rejoined the small servant; "Miss Sally 'ud kill me if she knowed I come up here."

"Have you got a fire down-stairs?" said Dick.

"A very little one," replied the small servant.

"Miss Sally couldn't kill me if she knowed I went down there, so I'll come," said Richard, putting the cards into his pocket. "Why, how thin you are! What do you mean by it?"

"It ain't my fault."

"Could you eat any bread and meat?" said Dick, taking down his hat. "Yes? Ah! I thought so. Did you ever taste beer?"

"I had a sip of it once," said the small servant.

"Here's a state of things!" cried Mr. Swiveller, raising his eyes to the ceiling. "She never tasted it—it can't be tasted in a sip! Why, how old are you?"

"I don't know."

Mr. Swiveller opened his eyes very wide, and appeared thoughtful for a moment; then, bidding the child mind the door until he came back, vanished straightway.

Presently he returned, followed by the boy from the public-house, who bore in one hand a plate of bread and beef, and in the other a great pot, filled with some very fragrant compound, which sent forth a grateful steam, and was indeed choice purl, made after a particular recipe which Mr. Swiveller had imparted to the landlord, at a period when he was deep in his books, and desirous to conciliate his friendship. Relieving the boy of his burden at the door, and charging his little companion to fasten it to prevent surprise, Mr. Swiveller followed her into the kitchen.

"There!" said Richard, putting the plate

before her. "First of all, clear that off, and then you'll see what's next."

The small servant needed no second bidding, and the plate was soon empty.

"Next," said Dick, handing the purl, "take a pull at that; but moderate your transports, you know, for you're not used to it. Well, is it good?"

"Oh! isn't it?" said the small servant.

Mr. Swiveller appeared gratified beyond all expression by this reply, and took a long draught himself: steadfastly regarding his companion while he did so. These preliminaries disposed of, he applied himself to teaching her the game, which she soon learnt tolerably well, being both sharp-witted and cunning.

"Now," said Mr. Swiveller, putting two six-pences into a saucer, and trimming the wretched candle, when the cards had been cut and dealt, "those are the stakes. If you win, you get 'em all. If I win, I get 'em. To make it seem more real and pleasant, I shall call you the Marchioness, do you hear?"

The small servant nodded.

"Then, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "fire away!"

The Marchioness, holding her cards very tight in both hands, considered which to play, and Mr. Swiveller, assuming the gay and fashionable air which such society required, took another pull at the tankard, and waited for her lead.

## CHAPTER LVIII.

MR. SWIVELLER and his partner played several rubbers with varying success, until the loss of three six-pences, the gradual sinking of the purl, and the striking of ten o'clock combined to render that gentleman mindful of the flight of Time, and the expediency of withdrawing before Mr. Sampson and Miss Sally Brass returned.

"With which object in view, Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller gravely, "I shall ask your ladyship's permission to put the board in my pocket, and to retire from the presence when I have finished this tankard; merely observing, Marchioness, that since life like a river is flowing, I care not how fast it rolls on, ma'am, on, while such purl on the bank still is growing, and such eyes light the waves as they run. Marchioness, your health. You will excuse my wearing my hat, but the palace is damp, and the marble



floor is—if I may be allowed the expression—sloppy.”

As a precaution against this latter inconvenience, Mr. Swiveller had been sitting for some time with his feet on the hob, in which attitude he now gave utterance to these apologetic observations, and slowly sipped the last choice drops of nectar.

“The Baron Sampson Brasso and his fair sister are (you tell me) at the Play?” said Mr. Swiveller, leaning his left arm heavily upon the table, and raising his voice and his right leg after the manner of a theatrical bandit.

The Marchioness nodded.

“Ha!” said Mr. Swiveller, with a portentous frown. “’Tis well. Marchioness!— But no matter. Some wine there. Ho!” He illustrated these melodramatic morsels by handing the tankard to himself with great humility, receiving it haughtily, drinking from it thirstily, and smacking his lips fiercely.

The small servant, who was not so well acquainted with theatrical conventionalities as Mr. Swiveller (having, indeed, never seen a play, or heard one spoken of, except by chance through chinks of doors and in other forbidden places), was rather alarmed by demonstrations so novel in their nature, and showed her concern so plainly in her looks, that Mr. Swiveller felt it necessary to discharge his brigand manner for one more suitable to private life, as he asked:

“Do they often go where glory waits ’em, and leave you here?”

“Oh yes; I believe you they do!” returned the small servant. “Miss Sally’s such a one-er for that, she is.”

“Such a what?” said Dick.

“Such a one-er,” returned the Marchioness.

After a moment’s reflection, Mr. Swiveller determined to forego his responsible duty of setting her right, and to suffer her to talk on; as it was evident that her tongue was loosened by the puri, and her opportunities for conversation were not so frequent as to render a momentary check of little consequence.

“They sometimes go to see Mr. Quilp,” said the small servant with a shrewd look; “they go to a many places, bless you!”

“Is Mr. Brass a wunner?” said Dick.

“Not half what Miss Sally is, he isn’t,” replied the small servant, shaking her head. “Bless you, he’d never do anything without her.”

“Oh! He wouldn’t, wouldn’t he?” said Dick.

“Miss Sally keeps him in such order,” said the small servant; “he always asks her advice, he does; and he catches it sometimes. Bless

you, you wouldn’t believe how much he catches it.”

“I suppose,” said Dick, “that they consult together a good deal, and talk about a great many people—about me, for instance, sometimes, eh, Marchioness?”

The Marchioness nodded amazingly.

“Complimentary?” said Mr. Swiveller.

The Marchioness changed the motion of her head, which had not yet left off nodding, and suddenly began to shake it from side to side with a vehemence which threatened to dislocate her neck.

“Humph!” Dick muttered. “Would it be any breach of confidence, Marchioness, to relate what they say of the humble individual who has now the honour to——”

“Miss Sally says you’re a funny chap,” replied his friend.

“Well, Marchioness,” said Mr. Swiveller, “that’s not uncomplimentary. Merriment, Marchioness, is not a bad or a degrading quality. Old King Cole was himself a merry old soul, if we may put any faith in the pages of history.”

“But she says,” pursued his companion, “that you an’t to be trusted.”

“Why, really, Marchioness,” said Mr. Swiveller thoughtfully; “several ladies and gentlemen—not exactly professional persons, but tradespeople, ma’am, tradespeople—have made the same remark. The obscure citizen who keeps the hotel over the way inclined strongly to that opinion to-night when I ordered him to prepare the banquet. It’s a popular prejudice, Marchioness; and yet I am sure I don’t know why, for I have been trusted in my time to a considerable amount, and I can safely say that I never forsook my trust until it deserted me—never. Mr. Brass is of the same opinion, I suppose?”

His friend nodded again, with a cunning look which seemed to hint that Mr. Brass held stronger opinions on the subject than his sister; and, seeming to recollect herself, added imploringly, “but don’t you ever tell upon me, or I shall be beat to death.”

“Marchioness,” said Mr. Swiveller, rising, “the word of a gentleman is as good as his bond—sometimes better, as in the present case, where his bond might prove but a doubtful sort of security. I am your friend, and I hope we shall play many more rubbers together in this same saloon. But, Marchioness,” added Richard, stopping in his way to the door, and wheeling slowly round upon the small servant, who was following with the candle; “it occurs to me

that you must be in the constant habit of airing your eye at keyholes, to know all this."

"I only wanted," replied the trembling Marchioness, "to know where the key of the safe was hid; that was all; and I wouldn't have taken much, if I had found it—only enough to squench my hunger."

"You didn't find it, then?" said Dick. "But of course you didn't, or you'd be plumper. Good night, Marchioness. Fare thee well, and

if for ever, then for ever fare thee well—and put up the chain, Marchioness, in case of accidents."

With this parting injunction, Mr. Swiveller emerged from the house; and feeling that he had by this time taken quite as much to drink as promised to be good for his constitution (purl being a rather strong and heady compound), wisely resolved to betake himself to his lodgings, and to bed at once. Homeward he went, therefore; and his apartments (for he still retained



"THEN, MARCHIONESS," SAID MR. SWIVELLER, "FIRE AWAY!"

the plural fiction) being at no great distance from the office, he was soon seated in his own bedchamber, where, having pulled off one boot and forgotten the other, he fell into deep cogitation.

"This Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, folding his arms, "is a very extraordinary person—surrounded by mysteries, ignorant of the taste of beer, unacquainted with her own name (which is less remarkable), and taking a limited view of society through the keyholes of doors. Can

these things be her destiny, or has some unknown person started an opposition to the decrees of fate? It is a most inscrutable and unmitigated staggerer!"

When his meditations had attained this satisfactory point, he became aware of his remaining boot, of which, with unimpaired solemnity, he proceeded to divest himself; shaking his head with exceeding gravity all the time, and sighing deeply.

"These rubbers," said Mr. Swiveller, putting



on his nightcap in exactly the same style as he wore his hat, "remind me of the matrimonial fireside. Cheggs's wife plays cribbage; all-fours likewise. She rings the changes on 'em now. From sport to sport they hurry her, to banish her regrets, and when they win a smile from her, they think that she forgets—but she don't. By this time, I should say," added Richard, getting his left cheek into profile; and looking complacently at the reflection of a very little scrap of whisker in the looking-glass; "by this time, I should say, the iron has entered into her soul. It serves her right!"

Melting from this stern and obdurate into the tender and pathetic mood, Mr. Swiveller groaned a little, walked wildly up and down, and even made a show of tearing his hair, which, however, he thought better of, and wrenched the tassel from his nightcap instead. At last, undressing himself with a gloomy resolution, he got into bed.

Some men in his blighted position would have taken to drinking; but as Mr. Swiveller had taken to that before, he only took, on receiving the news that Sophy Wackles was lost to him for ever, to playing the flute; thinking, after mature consideration, that it was a good, sound, dismal occupation, not only in unison with his own sad thoughts, but calculated to awaken a fellow-feeling in the bosoms of his neighbours. In pursuance of this resolution, he now drew a little table to his bedside, and arranging the light and a small oblong music-book to the best advantage, took his flute from its box, and began to play most mournfully.

The air was, "Away with melancholy"—a composition which, when it is played very slowly on the flute in bed, with the further disadvantage of being performed by a gentleman but imperfectly acquainted with the instrument, who repeats one note a great many times before he can find the next, has not a lively effect. Yet, for half the night, or more, Mr. Swiveller, lying sometimes on his back with his eyes upon the ceiling, and sometimes half out of bed to correct himself by the book, played this unhappy tune over and over again; never leaving off, save for a minute or two at a time to take breath and soliloquise about the Marchioness, and then beginning again with renewed vigour. It was not until he had quite exhausted his several subjects of meditation, and had breathed into the flute the whole sentiment of the purl down to its very dregs, and had nearly maddened the people of the house, and at both the next doors, and over the way, that he shut up the music-book, extinguished the candle, and finding him-

self greatly lightened and relieved in his mind, turned round and fell asleep.

He awoke in the morning much refreshed; and having taken half an hour's exercise at the flute, and graciously received a notice to quit from his landlady, who had been in waiting on the stairs for that purpose since the dawn of day, repaired to Bevis Marks; where the beautiful Sally was already at her post, bearing in her looks a radiance mild as that which beameth from the virgin moon.

Mr. Swiveller acknowledged her presence by a nod, and exchanged his coat for the aquatic jacket; which usually took some time fitting on, for, in consequence of a tightness in the sleeves, it was only to be got into by a series of struggles. This difficulty overcome, he took his seat at the desk.

"I say," quoth Miss Brass, abruptly breaking silence, "you haven't seen a silver pencil-case this morning, have you?"

"I didn't meet many in the street," rejoined Mr. Swiveller. "I saw one—a stout pencil-case of respectable appearance—but, as he was in company with an elderly penknife and a young toothpick with whom he was in earnest conversation, I felt a delicacy in speaking to him."

"No, but have you?" returned Miss Brass. "Seriously, you know."

"What a dull dog you must be to ask me such a question seriously!" said Mr. Swiveller. "Haven't I this moment come?"

"Well, all I know is," replied Miss Sally, "that it's not to be found, and that it disappeared one day this week, when I left it on the desk."

"Halloa!" thought Richard, "I hope the Marchioness hasn't been at work here."

"There was a knife too," said Miss Sally, "of the same pattern. They were given to me by my father, years ago, and are both gone. You haven't missed anything yourself, have you?"

Mr. Swiveller involuntarily clapped his hands to the jacket, to be quite sure that it *was* a jacket, and not a skirted coat; and, having satisfied himself of the safety of this, his only movable in Bevis Marks, made answer in the negative.

"It's a very unpleasant thing, Dick," said Miss Brass, pulling out the tin box and refreshing herself with a pinch of snuff; "but, between you and me—between friends you know, for, if Sammy knew it, I should never hear the last of it—some of the office money, too, that has been left about, has gone in the same way. In particular, I have missed three half-crowns at three different times."

"You don't mean that?" cried Dick. "Be careful what you say, old boy, for this is a serious matter. Are you quite sure? Is there no mistake?"

"It is so, and there can't be any mistake at all," rejoined Miss Brass emphatically.

"Then, by Jove," thought Richard, laying down his pen, "I am afraid the Marchioness is done for!"

The more he discussed the subject in his thoughts, the more probable it appeared to Dick that the miserable little servant was the culprit. When he considered on what a spare allowance of food she lived, how neglected and untaught she was, and how her natural cunning had been sharpened by necessity and privation, he scarcely doubted it. And yet he pitied her so much, and felt so unwilling to have a matter of such gravity disturbing the oddity of their acquaintance, that he thought, and thought truly, that rather than receive fifty pounds down, he would have the Marchioness proved innocent.

While he was plunged in very profound and serious meditation upon this theme, Miss Sally sat shaking her head with an air of great mystery and doubt; when the voice of her brother Sampson carolling a cheerful strain was heard in the passage, and that gentleman himself, beaming with virtuous smiles, appeared.

"Mr. Richard, sir, good morning! Here we are again, sir, entering upon another day, with our bodies strengthened by slumber and breakfast, and our spirits fresh and flowing. Here we are, Mr. Richard, rising with the sun to run our little course—our course of duty, sir—and, like him, to get through our day's work with credit to ourselves and advantage to our fellow-creatures. A charming reflection, sir, very charming!"

While he addressed his clerk in these words, Mr. Brass was, somewhat ostentatiously, engaged in minutely examining and holding up against the light a five-pound bank note, which he had brought in in his hand.

Mr. Richard not receiving his remarks with anything like enthusiasm, his employer turned his eyes to his face, and observed that it wore a troubled expression.

"You're out of spirits, sir," said Brass. "Mr. Richard, sir, we should fall to work cheerfully, and not in a despondent state. It becomes us, Mr. Richard, sir, to——"

Here the chaste Sarah heaved a loud sigh.

"Dear me!" said Mr. Sampson, "you too! Is anything the matter? Mr. Richard, sir——"

Dick, glancing at Miss Sally, saw that she

was making signals to him to acquaint her brother with the subject of their recent conversation. As his own position was not a very pleasant one until the matter was set at rest one way or other, he did so; and Miss Brass, plying her snuff-box at a most wasteful rate, corroborated his account.

The countenance of Sampson fell, and anxiety overspread his features. Instead of passionately bewailing the loss of his money, as Miss Sally had expected, he walked on tiptoe to the door, opened it, looked outside, shut it softly, returned on tiptoe, and said in a whisper:

"This is a most extraordinary and painful circumstance—Mr. Richard, sir, a most painful circumstance. The fact is, that I myself have missed several small sums from the desk of late, and have refrained from mentioning it, hoping that accident would discover the offender; but it has not done so—it has not done so. Sally—Mr. Richard, sir—this is a particularly distressing affair."

As Sampson spoke, he laid the bank note upon the desk among some papers in an absent manner, and thrust his hands into his pockets. Richard Swiveller pointed to it, and admonished him to take it up.

"No, Mr. Richard, sir," rejoined Brass with emotion, "I will not take it up. I will let it lie there, sir. To take it up, Mr. Richard, sir, would imply a doubt of you; and in you, sir, I have unlimited confidence. We will let it lie there, sir, if you please, and we will not take it up by any means." With that, Mr. Brass patted him twice or thrice on the shoulder in a most friendly manner, and entreated him to believe that he had as much faith in his honesty as he had in his own.

Although at another time Mr. Swiveller might have looked upon this as a doubtful compliment, he felt it, under the then existing circumstances, a great relief to be assured that he was not wrongfully suspected. When he had made a suitable reply, Mr. Brass wrung him by the hand, and fell into a brown study, as did Miss Sally likewise. Richard, too, remained in a thoughtful state; fearing every moment to hear the Marchioness impeached, and unable to resist the conviction that she must be guilty.

When they had severally remained in this condition for some minutes, Miss Sally all at once gave a loud rap upon the desk with her clenched fist, and cried, "I've hit it!"—as indeed she had, and chipped a piece out of it too; but that was not her meaning.

"Well!" cried Brass anxiously. "Go on, will you?"



"Why," replied his sister with an air of triumph, "hasn't there been somebody always coming in and out of this office for the last three or four weeks; hasn't that somebody been left alone in it sometimes—thanks to you; and do you mean to tell me that that somebody isn't the thief?"

"What somebody?" blustered Brass.

"Why, what do you call him—Kit."

"Mr. Garland's young man?"

"To be sure."

"Never!" cried Brass. "Never! I'll not hear of it. Don't tell me!" said Sampson, shaking his head, and working with both his hands as if he were clearing away ten thousand cobwebs. "I'll never believe it of him. Never!"

"I say," repeated Miss Brass, taking another pinch of snuff, "that he's the thief."

"I say," returned Sampson violently, "that he is *not*. What do you mean? How dare you? Are characters to be whispered away like this? Do you know that he's the honestest and faithfullest fellow that ever lived, and that he has an irreproachable good name? Come in, come in!"

These last words were not addressed to Miss Sally, though they partook of the tone in which the indignant remonstrances that preceded them had been uttered. They were addressed to some person who had knocked at the office door; and they had hardly passed the lips of Mr. Brass, when this very Kit himself looked in.

"Is the gentleman up-stairs, sir, if you please?"

"Yes, Kit," said Brass, still fired with an honest indignation, and frowning with knotted brows upon his sister; "yes, Kit, he is. I am glad to see you, Kit; I am rejoiced to see you. Look in again as you come down-stairs, Kit. *That* lad a robber!" cried Brass when he had withdrawn, "with that frank and open countenance! I'd trust him with untold gold. Mr. Richard, sir, have the goodness to step directly to Wrasp and Co.'s in Broad Street, and inquire if they have had instructions to appear in Carkem and Painter. *That* lad a robber!" sneered Sampson, flushed and heated with his wrath. "Am I blind, deaf, silly; do I know nothing of human nature when I see it before me? Kit a robber! Bah!"

Flinging this final interjection at Miss Sally with immeasurable scorn and contempt, Sampson Brass thrust his head into his desk, as if to shut the base world from his view, and breathed defiance from under its half-closed lid.

## CHAPTER LIX.

**W**HEN Kit, having discharged his errand, came down-stairs from the single gentleman's apartment after the lapse of a quarter of an hour or so, Mr. Sampson Brass was alone in the office. He was not singing as usual, nor was he seated at his desk. The open door showed him standing before the fire with his back towards it, and looking so very strange that Kit supposed he must have been suddenly taken ill.

"Is anything the matter, sir?" said Kit.

"Matter!" cried Brass. "No. Why anything the matter?"

"You are so very pale," said Kit, "that I should hardly have known you."

"Pooh, pooh! mere fancy," cried Brass, stooping to throw up the cinders. "Never better, Kit, never better in all my life. Merry too. Ha, ha! How's our friend above-stairs, eh?"

"A great deal better," said Kit.

"I'm glad to hear it," rejoined Brass; "thankful, I may say. An excellent gentleman—worthy, liberal, generous, gives very little trouble—an admirable lodger. Ha, ha! Mr. Garland—he's well I hope, Kit—and the pony—my friend, my particular friend, you know. Ha, ha!"

Kit gave a satisfactory account of all the little household at Abel Cottage. Mr. Brass, who seemed remarkably inattentive and impatient, mounted on his stool, and, beckoning him to come nearer, took him by the button-hole.

"I have been thinking, Kit," said the lawyer, "that I could throw some little emoluments into your mother's way. You have a mother, I think? If I recollect right, you told me——"

"Oh yes, sir, yes, certainly!"

"A widow, I think? an industrious widow?"

"A harder-working woman or a better mother never lived, sir."

"Ah!" cried Brass. "That's affecting, truly affecting. A poor widow struggling to maintain her orphans in decency and comfort is a delicious picture of human goodness.—Put down your hat, Kit."

"Thank you, sir, I must be going directly."

"Put it down while you stay, at any rate," said Brass, taking it from him and making some confusion among the papers, in finding a place for it on the desk. "I was thinking, Kit, that we have often houses to let for people we are concerned for, and matters of that sort. Now,

you know we're obliged to put people into those houses to take care of 'em—very often undeserving people that we can't depend upon. What's to prevent our having a person that we can depend upon, and enjoying the delight of doing a good action at the same time? I say, what's to prevent our employing this worthy woman, your mother? What with one job and another, there's lodging—and good lodging too—pretty well all the year round, rent free, and a weekly allowance besides, Kit, that would provide her with a great many comforts she

don't at present enjoy. Now what do you think of that? Do you see any objection? My only desire is to serve you, Kit; therefore, if you do, say so freely."

As Brass spoke, he moved the hat twice or thrice, and shuffled among the papers again, as if in search of something.

"How can I see any objection to such a kind offer, sir?" replied Kit with his whole heart. "I don't know how to thank you, sir, I don't indeed."

"Why, then," said Brass, suddenly turning



"THE AIR WAS, 'AWAY WITH MELANCHOLY.'"

upon him and thrusting his face close to Kit's with such a repulsive smile that the latter, even in the very height of his gratitude, drew back, quite startled. "Why, then, *it's done.*"

Kit looked at him in some confusion.

"Done, I say," added Sampson, rubbing his hands and veiling himself again in his usual oily manner. "Ha, ha! and so you shall find, Kit, so you shall find. But dear me," said Brass, "what a time Mr. Richard is gone! A sad loiterer to be sure! Will you mind the office one minute while I run up-stairs? Only one

minute. I'll not detain you an instant longer, on any account, Kit."

Talking as he went, Mr. Brass bustled out of the office, and in a very short time returned. Mr. Swiveller came back almost at the same instant; and as Kit was leaving the room hastily, to make up for lost time, Miss Brass herself encountered him in the doorway.

"Oh!" sneered Sally, looking after him as she entered. "There goes your pet, Sammy, eh?"

"Ah! There he goes," replied Brass. "My



pet, if you please. An honest fellow, Mr. Richard, sir—a worthy fellow indeed!”

“Hem!” coughed Miss Brass.

“I tell you, you aggravating vagabond,” said the angry Sampson, “that I’d stake my life upon his honesty. Am I never to hear the last of this? Am I always to be baited and beset by your mean suspicions? Have you no regard for true merit, you malignant fellow? If you come to that, I’d sooner suspect your honesty than his.”

Miss Sally pulled out the tin snuff-box, and took a long, slow pinch: regarding her brother with a steady gaze all the time.

“She drives me wild, Mr. Richard, sir,” said Brass; “she exasperates me beyond all bearing. I am heated and excited, sir, I know I am. These are not business manners, sir, nor business looks, but she carries me out of myself.”

“Why don’t you leave him alone?” said Dick.

“Because she can’t, sir,” retorted Brass; “because to chafe and vex me is a part of her nature, sir, and she will and must do it, or I don’t believe she’d have her health. But never mind,” said Brass, “never mind. I’ve carried my point. I’ve shown my confidence in the lad. He has minded the office again. Ha, ha! Ugh, you viper!”

The beautiful virgin took another pinch, and put the snuff-box in her pocket; still looking at her brother with perfect composure.

“He has minded the office again,” said Brass triumphantly; “he has had my confidence, and he shall continue to have it; he—why, where’s the—”

“What have you lost?” inquired Mr. Swiveller.

“Dear me!” said Brass, slapping all his pockets one after another, and looking into his desk, and under it, and upon it, and wildly tossing the papers about, “the note, Mr. Richard, sir, the five-pound note—what can have become of it? I laid it down here. God bless me!”

“What!” cried Miss Sally, starting up, clapping her hands, and scattering the papers on the floor. “Gone! Now who’s right? Now who’s got it? Never mind five pounds—what’s five pounds? He’s honest you know, quite honest. It would be mean to suspect *him*. Don’t run after him. No, no, not for the world!”

“Is it really gone, though?” said Dick, looking at Brass with a face as pale as his own.

“Upon my word, Mr. Richard, sir,” replied the lawyer, feeling in all his pockets with looks

of the greatest agitation, “I fear this is a black business. It’s certainly gone, sir. What’s to be done?”

“Don’t run after him,” said Miss Sally, taking more snuff. “Don’t run after him on any account. Give him time to get rid of it, you know. It would be cruel to find him out!”

Mr. Swiveller and Sampson Brass looked from Miss Sally to each other in a state of bewilderment, and then, as by one impulse, caught up their hats and rushed out into the street—darting along in the middle of the road, and dashing aside all obstructions, as though they were running for their lives.

It happened that Kit had been running too, though not so fast, and, having the start of them by some few minutes, was a good distance ahead. As they were pretty certain of the road he must have taken, however, and kept on at a great pace, they came up with him, at the very moment when he had taken breath, and was breaking into a run again.

“Stop!” cried Sampson, laying his hand on one shoulder, while Mr. Swiveller pounced upon the other. “Not so fast, sir. You’re in a hurry?”

“Yes, I am,” said Kit, looking from one to the other in great surprise.

“I—I—can hardly believe it,” panted Sampson, “but something of value is missing from the office. I hope you don’t know what.”

“Know what! Good Heaven, Mr. Brass!” cried Kit, trembling from head to foot; “you don’t suppose—”

“No, no,” rejoined Brass quickly, “I don’t suppose anything. Don’t say *I* said you did. You’ll come back quietly, I hope?”

“Of course I will,” returned Kit. “Why not?”

“To be sure!” said Brass. “Why not? I hope there may turn out to be no why not. If you knew the trouble I’ve been in this morning, through taking your part, Christopher, you’d be sorry for it.”

“And I am sure you’ll be sorry for having suspected me, sir,” replied Kit. “Come. Let us make haste back.”

“Certainly!” cried Brass, “the quicker the better. Mr. Richard—have the goodness, sir, to take that arm. I’ll take this one. It’s not easy walking three abreast, but under these circumstances it must be done, sir; there’s no help for it.”

Kit did turn from white to red, and from red to white again, when they secured him thus, and for a moment seemed disposed to resist. But, quickly recollecting himself, and remembering

that if he made any struggle, he would perhaps be dragged by the collar through the public streets, he only repeated, with great earnestness, and with the tears standing in his eyes, that they would be sorry for this—and suffered them to lead him off. While they were on the way back, Mr. Swiveller, upon whom his present functions sat very irksomely, took an opportunity of whispering in his ear that if he would confess his guilt, even by so much as a nod, and promise not to do so any more, he would connive at his kicking Sampson Brass on the shins and escaping up a court; but Kit indignantly rejecting this proposal, Mr. Richard had nothing for it but to hold him tight until they reached Bevis Marks, and ushered him into the presence of the charming Sarah, who immediately took the precaution of locking the door.

“Now, you know,” said Brass, “if this is a case of innocence, it is a case of that description, Christopher, where the fullest disclosure is the best satisfaction for everybody. Therefore, if you’ll consent to an examination,” he demonstrated what kind of examination he meant by turning back the cuffs of his coat, “it will be a comfortable and pleasant thing for all parties.”

“Search me,” said Kit, proudly holding up his arms. “But mind, sir—I know you’ll be sorry for this to the last day of your life.”

“It is certainly a very painful occurrence,” said Brass with a sigh, as he dived into one of Kit’s pockets, and fished up a miscellaneous collection of small articles; “very painful. Nothing here, Mr. Richard, sir; all perfectly satisfactory. Nor here, sir. Nor in the waist-coat, Mr. Richard, nor in the coat-tails. So far, I am rejoiced, I am sure.”

Richard Swiveller, holding Kit’s hat in his hand, was watching the proceedings with great interest, and bore upon his face the slightest possible indication of a smile, as Brass, shutting one of his eyes, looked with the other up the inside of one of the poor fellow’s sleeves as if it were a telescope—when Sampson, turning hastily to him, bade him search the hat.

“Here’s a handkerchief,” said Dick.

“No harm in that, sir,” rejoined Brass, applying his eye to the other sleeve, and speaking in the voice of one who was contemplating an immense extent of prospect. “No harm in a handkerchief, sir, whatever. The faculty don’t consider it a healthy custom, I believe, Mr. Richard, to carry one’s handkerchief in one’s hat—I have heard that it keeps the head too warm—but, in every other point of view, its being there is extremely satisfactory—ex-tremely so.”

An exclamation, at once from Richard Swiveller, Miss Sally, and Kit himself, cut the lawyer short. He turned his head, and saw Dick standing with the bank note in his hand.

“In the hat?” cried Brass in a sort of shriek. “Under the handkerchief, and tucked beneath the lining,” said Dick, aghast at the discovery.

Mr. Brass looked at him, at his sister, at the walls, at the ceiling, at the floor—everywhere but at Kit, who stood quite stupefied and motionless.

“And this,” cried Sampson, clasping his hands, “is the world that turns upon its own axis, and has Lunar influences, and revolutions round Heavenly Bodies, and various games of that sort! This is human natur’, is it? Oh, natur’, natur’! This is the miscreant that I was going to benefit with all my little arts, and that, even now, I feel so much for as to wish to let him go! But,” added Mr. Brass with greater fortitude, “I am myself a lawyer, and bound to set an example in carrying the laws of my happy country into effect. Sally, my dear, forgive me, and catch hold of him on the other side. Mr. Richard, sir, have the goodness to run and fetch a constable. The weakness is past and over, sir, and moral strength returns. A constable, sir, if you please!”

## CHAPTER LX.

**K**IT stood as one entranced, with his eyes opened wide and fixed upon the ground, regardless alike of the tremulous hold which Mr. Brass maintained on one side of his cravat, and of the firmer grasp of Miss Sally upon the other; although this latter detention was in itself no small inconvenience, as that fascinating woman, besides screwing her knuckles inconveniently into his throat from time to time, had fastened upon him, in the first instance, with so tight a grip that even in the disorder and distraction of his thoughts he could not divest himself of an uneasy sense of choking. Between the brother and sister he remained in this posture, quite unresisting and passive, until Mr. Swiveller returned, with a police constable at his heels.

This functionary, being, of course, well used to such scenes; looking upon all kinds of robbery, from petty larceny up to housebreaking or ventures on the highway, as matters in the regular course of business; and regarding the perpetrators in the light of so many customers



coming to be served at the wholesale and retail shop of criminal law where he stood behind the counter; received Mr. Brass's statement of facts with about as much interest and surprise as an undertaker might evince if required to listen to a circumstantial account of the last illness of a person whom he was called in to wait upon professionally; and took Kit into custody with a decent indifference.

"We had better," said this subordinate minister of justice, "get to the office while there's a magistrate sitting. I shall want you to come along with us, Mr. Brass, and the——" He looked at Miss Sally as if in some doubt whether she might not be a griffin or other fabulous monster.

"The lady, eh?" said Sampson.

"Ah!" replied the constable. "Yes—the lady. Likewise the young man that found the property."

"Mr. Richard, sir," said Brass in a mournful voice. "A sad necessity. But the altar of our country, sir——"

"You'll have a hackney coach, I suppose?" interrupted the constable, holding Kit (whom his other captors had released) carelessly by the arm, a little above the elbow. "Be so good as send for one, will you?"

"But hear me speak a word," cried Kit, raising his eyes, and looking imploringly about him. "Hear me speak a word. I am no more guilty than any one of you. Upon my soul I am not. I a thief! Oh, Mr. Brass, you know me better! I am sure you know me better. This is not right of you, indeed."

"I give you my word, constable——" said Brass. But here the constable interposed with the constitutional principle, "Words be blowed;" observing that words were but spoon-meat for babes and sucklings, and that oaths were the food for strong men.

"Quite true, constable," assented Brass in the same mournful tone. "Strictly correct. I give you my oath, constable, that down to a few minutes ago, when this fatal discovery was made, I had such confidence in that lad, that I'd have trusted him with—— A hackney coach, Mr. Richard, sir; you're very slow, sir."

"Who is there that knows me," cried Kit, "that would not trust me—that does not? Ask anybody whether they have ever doubted me; whether I have ever wronged them of a farthing. Was I ever once dishonest when I was poor and hungry, and is it likely I would begin now? Oh, consider what you do! How can I meet the kindest friends that ever human creature had, with this dreadful charge upon me?"

Mr. Brass rejoined that it would have been well for the prisoner if he had thought of that before, and was about to make some other gloomy observations when the voice of the single gentleman was heard, demanding from above-stairs what was the matter, and what was the cause of all that noise and hurry. Kit made an involuntary start towards the door in his anxiety to answer for himself, but, being speedily detained by the constable, had the agony of seeing Sampson Brass run out alone to tell the story in his own way.

"And he can hardly believe it, either," said Sampson when he returned, "nor nobody will. I wish I could doubt the evidence of my senses, but their depositions are unimpeachable. It's of no use cross-examining my eyes," cried Sampson, winking and rubbing them, "they stick to their first account, and will. Now, Sarah, I hear the coach in the Marks; get on your bonnet, and we'll be off. A sad errand! a moral funeral, quite!"

"Mr. Brass," said Kit, "do me one favour. Take me to Mr. Witherden's first."

Sampson shook his head irresolutely.

"Do," said Kit. "My master's there. For Heaven's sake, take me there first!"

"Well, I don't know," stammered Brass, who perhaps had his reasons for wishing to show as fair as possible in the eyes of the notary. "How do we stand in point of time, constable, eh?"

The constable, who had been chewing a straw all this while with great philosophy, replied that if they went away at once they would have time enough, but that, if they stood shilly-shallying there any longer, they must go straight to the Mansion House; and finally expressed his opinion that that was where it was, and that was all about it.

Mr. Richard Swiveller having arrived inside the coach, and still remaining immovable in the most commodious corner with his face to the horses, Mr. Brass instructed the officer to remove his prisoner, and declared himself quite ready. Therefore, the constable, still holding Kit in the same manner, and pushing him on a little before him, so as to keep him at about three-quarters of an arm's length in advance (which is the professional mode), thrust him into the vehicle, and followed himself. Miss Sally entered next; and, there being now four inside, Sampson Brass got upon the box, and made the coachman drive on.

Still completely stunned by the sudden and terrible change which had taken place in his affairs, Kit sat gazing out of the coach window,

almost hoping to see some monstrous phenomenon in the streets which might give him reason to believe he was in a dream. Alas! everything was too real and familiar: the same succession of turnings, the same houses, the same streams of people running side by side in different directions upon the pavement, the same bustle of carts and carriages in the road, the same well-remembered objects in the shop-windows: a regularity in the very noise and hurry which no dream ever mirrored. Dream-like as the story was, it was true. He stood charged with robbery; the note had been found upon him, though he was innocent in thought and deed; and they were carrying him back a prisoner.

Absorbed in these painful ruminations, thinking with a drooping heart of his mother and little Jacob, feeling as though even the consciousness of innocence would be insufficient to support him in the presence of his friends if they believed him guilty, and sinking in hope and courage more and more as they drew nearer to the notary's, poor Kit was looking earnestly out of the window, observant of nothing,—when all at once, as though it had been conjured up by magic, he became aware of the face of Quilp.

And what a leer there was upon the face! It was from the open window of a tavern that it looked out; and the dwarf had so spread himself over it, with his elbows on the window-sill and his head resting on both his hands, that what between this attitude and his being swollen with suppressed laughter, he looked puffed and bloated into twice his usual breadth. Mr. Brass, on recognising him, immediately stopped the coach. As it came to a halt directly opposite to where he stood, the dwarf pulled off his hat, and saluted the party with a hideous and grotesque politeness.

"Aha!" he cried. "Where now, Brass? where now? Sally with you too? Sweet Sally! And Dick? Pleasant Dick! And Kit? Honest Kit!"

"He's extremely cheerful!" said Brass to the coachman. "Very much so! Ah, sir—a sad business! Never believe in honesty any more, sir."

"Why not?" returned the dwarf. "Why not, you rogue of a lawyer, why not?"

"Bank note lost in our office, sir," said Brass, shaking his head. "Found in his hat, sir—he previously left alone there—no mistake at all, sir—chain of evidence complete—not a link wanting."

"What!" cried the dwarf, leaning half his body out of window, "Kit a thief! Kit a thief!"

Ha, ha, ha! Why, he's an uglier-looking thief than can be seen anywhere for a penny. Eh, Kit—eh? Ha, ha, ha! Have you taken Kit into custody before he had time and opportunity to beat me? Eh, Kit, eh?" And, with that, he burst into a yell of laughter, manifestly to the great terror of the coachman, and pointed to a dyer's pole hard by, where a dangling suit of clothes bore some resemblance to a man upon a gibbet.

"Is it coming to that, Kit?" cried the dwarf, rubbing his hands violently. "Ha, ha, ha, ha! What a disappointment for little Jacob, and for his darling mother! Let him have the Bethel minister to comfort and console him, Brass. Eh, Kit, eh? Drive on, coachey, drive on. Bye, bye, Kit; all good go with you; keep up your spirits; my love to the Garlands—the dear old lady and gentleman. Say I inquired after 'em, will you? Blessings on 'em, and on you, and on everybody, Kit. Blessings on all the world!"

With such good wishes and farewells, poured out in a rapid torrent until they were out of hearing, Quilp suffered them to depart; and, when he could see the coach no longer, drew in his head, and rolled upon the ground in an ecstasy of enjoyment.

When they reached the notary's, which they were not long in doing, for they had encountered the dwarf in a by-street at a very little distance from the house, Mr. Brass dismounted; and, opening the coach door with a melancholy visage, requested his sister to accompany him into the office, with the view of preparing the good people within for the mournful intelligence that awaited them. Miss Sally complying, he desired Mr. Swiveller to accompany them. So, into the office they went; Mr. Sampson and his sister arm-in-arm; and Mr. Swiveller following alone.

The notary was standing before the fire in the outer office, talking to Mr. Abel and the elder Mr. Garland, while Mr. Chuckster sat writing at the desk, picking up such crumbs of their conversation as happened to fall in his way. This posture of affairs Mr. Brass observed through the glass door as he was turning the handle, and, seeing that the notary recognised him, he began to shake his head and sigh deeply while that partition yet divided them.

"Sir," said Sampson, taking off his hat, and kissing the two forefingers of his right-hand beaver glove, "my name is Brass—Brass of Bevis Marks, sir. I have had the honour and pleasure, sir, of being concerned against you in some little testamentary matters. How do you do, sir?"



"My clerk will attend to any business you may have come upon, Mr. Brass," said the notary, turning away.

"Thank you, sir," said Brass, "thank you, I am sure. Allow me, sir, to introduce my sister—quite one of us, sir, although of the weaker sex—of great use in my business, sir, I assure you. Mr. Richard, sir, have the goodness to come forward, if you please. No, really," said Brass, stepping between the notary and his private office (towards which he had begun to retreat), and speaking in the tone of an injured man, "really, sir, I must, under favour, request a word or two with you, indeed."

"Mr. Brass," said the other in a decided tone, "I am engaged. You see that I am occupied with these gentlemen. If you will communicate your business to Mr. Chuckster yonder, you will receive every attention."

"Gentlemen," said Brass, laying his right hand on his waistcoat, and looking towards the father and son with a smooth smile—"gentlemen, I appeal to you—really, gentlemen—consider, I beg of you. I am of the law. I am styled 'gentleman' by Act of Parliament. I maintain the title by the annual payment of twelve pounds sterling for a certificate. I am not one of your players of music, stage actors, writers of books, or painters of pictures, who assume a station that the laws of their country don't recognise. I am none of your strollers or vagabonds. If any man brings his action against me, he must describe me as a gentleman, or his action is null and void. I appeal to you—is this quite respectful? Really, gentlemen——"

"Well, will you have the goodness to state your business, then, Mr. Brass?" said the notary.

"Sir," rejoined Brass, "I will. Ah, Mr. Witherden! you little know the—— But I will not be tempted to travel from the point, sir. I believe the name of one of these gentlemen is Garland."

"Of both," said the notary.

"In-deed!" rejoined Brass, cringing excessively. "But I might have known that from the uncommon likeness. Extremely happy, I am sure, to have the honour of an introduction to two such gentlemen, although the occasion is a most painful one. One of you gentlemen has a servant called Kit."

"Both," replied the notary.

"Two Kits?" said Brass, smiling. "Dear me!"

"One Kit, sir," returned Mr. Witherden angrily, "who is employed by both gentlemen. What of him?"

"This of him, sir," rejoined Brass, dropping

his voice impressively. "That young man, sir, that I have felt unbounded and unlimited confidence in, and always behaved to as if he was my equal—that young man has this morning committed a robbery in my office, and been taken almost in the fact."

"This must be some falsehood!" cried the notary.

"It is not possible," said Mr. Abel.

"I'll not believe one word of it," exclaimed the old gentleman.

Mr. Brass looked mildly round upon them, and rejoined:

"Mr. Witherden, sir, *your* words are actionable, and if I was a man of low and mean standing, who couldn't afford to be slandered, I should proceed for damages. Hows'ever, sir, being what I am, I merely scorn such expressions. The honest warmth of the other gentleman I respect, and I'm truly sorry to be the messenger of such unpleasant news. I shouldn't have put myself in this painful position, I assure you, but that the lad himself desired to be brought here in the first instance, and I yielded to his prayers. Mr. Chuckster, sir, will you have the goodness to tap at the window for the constable that's waiting in the coach?"

The three gentlemen looked at each other with blank faces when these words were uttered, and Mr. Chuckster, doing as he was desired, and leaping off his stool with something of the excitement of an inspired prophet whose foretellings had in the fulness of time been realised, held the door open for the entrance of the wretched captive.

Such a scene as there was when Kit came in, and, bursting into the rude eloquence with which Truth at length inspired him, called Heaven to witness that he was innocent, and that how the property came to be found upon him he knew not! Such a confusion of tongues before the circumstances were related, and the proofs disclosed! Such a dead silence when all was told, and his three friends exchanged looks of doubt and amazement!

"Is it not possible," said Mr. Witherden after a long pause, "that this note may have found its way into the hat by some accident,—such as the removal of papers on the desk, for instance?"

But this was clearly shown to be quite impossible. Mr. Swiveller, though an unwilling witness, could not help proving to demonstration, from the position in which it was found, that it must have been designedly secreted.

"It's very distressing," said Brass, "immensely distressing, I am sure. When he comes to be tried, I shall be very happy to recommend him

to mercy on account of his previous good character. I did lose money before, certainly, but it doesn't quite follow that he took it. The presumption's against him—strongly against him—but we're Christians, I hope."

"I suppose," said the constable, looking round, "that no gentleman here can give evidence as to whether he's been flush of money of late. Do you happen to know, sir?"

"He has had money from time to time, certainly," returned Mr. Garland, to whom the man had put the question. "But that, as he always told me, was given him by Mr. Brass himself."

"Yes, to be sure," said Kit eagerly. "You can bear me out in that, sir?"

"Eh?" cried Brass, looking from face to face with an expression of stupid amazement.

"The money, you know, the half-crowns that you gave me—from the lodger," said Kit.

"Oh dear me!" cried Brass, shaking his head and frowning heavily. "This is a bad case, I find! a very bad case indeed!"

"What! Did you give him no money on account of anybody, sir?" asked Mr. Garland with great anxiety.

"I give him money, sir!" returned Sampson. "Oh, come, you know, this is too barefaced! Constable, my good fellow, we had better be going."

"What!" shrieked Kit. "Does he deny that he did? Ask him, somebody, pray. Ask him to tell you whether he did or not!"

"Did you, sir?" asked the notary.

"I tell you what, gentlemen," replied Brass in a very grave manner, "he'll not serve his case this way, and really, if you feel any interest in him, you had better advise him to go upon some other tack. Did I, sir? Of course I never did."

"Gentlemen," cried Kit, on whom a light broke suddenly, "Master, Mr. Abel, Mr. Witherden, every one of you—he did it! What I have done to offend him I don't know, but this is a plot to ruin me. Mind, gentlemen, it's a plot, and, whatever comes of it, I will say with my dying breath that he put that note in my hat himself! Look at him, gentlemen! See how he changes colour! Which of us looks the guilty person—he or I?"

"You hear him, gentlemen?" said Brass, smiling, "you hear him? Now, does this case strike you as assuming rather a black complexion, or does it not? Is it at all a treacherous case, do you think, or is it one of mere ordinary guilt? Perhaps, gentlemen, if he had not said this in your presence, and I had re-

ported it, you'd have held this to be impossible likewise, eh?"

With such pacific and bantering remarks did Mr. Brass refute the foul aspersion on his character; but the virtuous Sarah, moved by stronger feelings, and having at heart, perhaps, a more jealous regard for the honour of her family, flew from her brother's side, without any previous intimation of her design, and darted at the prisoner with the utmost fury. It would undoubtedly have gone hard with Kit's face, but that the wary constable, foreseeing her design, drew him aside at the critical moment, and thus placed Mr. Chuckster in circumstances of some jeopardy; for that gentleman happening to be next the object of Miss Brass's wrath; and rage being, like love and fortune, blind; was pounced upon by the fair enslaver, and had a false collar plucked up by the roots, and his hair very much dishevelled, before the exertions of the company could make her sensible of her mistake.

The constable, taking warning by this desperate attack, and thinking, perhaps, that it would be more satisfactory to the ends of justice if the prisoner were taken before a magistrate whole, rather than in small pieces, led him back to the hackney coach without more ado, and, moreover, insisted on Miss Brass becoming an outside passenger; to which proposal the charming creature, after a little angry discussion, yielded her consent, and so took her brother Sampson's place upon the box: Mr. Brass, with some reluctance, agreeing to occupy her seat inside. These arrangements perfected, they drove to the justice-room with all speed, followed by the notary and his two friends in another coach. Mr. Chuckster alone was left behind—greatly to his indignation; for he held the evidence he could have given, relative to Kit's returning to work out the shilling, to be so very material as bearing upon his hypocritical and designing character, that he considered its suppression little better than a compromise of felony.

At the justice-room they found the single gentleman, who had gone straight there, and was expecting them with desperate impatience. But, not fifty single gentlemen rolled into one could have helped poor Kit, who in half an hour afterwards was committed for trial, and was assured by a friendly officer, on his way to prison, that there was no occasion to be cast down, for the sessions would soon be on, and he would, in all likelihood, get his little affair disposed of, and be comfortably transported, in less than a fortnight.



## CHAPTER LXI.

**L**ET moralists and philosophers say what they may, it is very questionable whether a guilty man would have felt half as much misery that night as Kit did, being innocent.

The world, being in the constant commission of vast quantities of injustice, is a little too apt to comfort itself with the idea that, if the victim of its falsehood and malice have a clear conscience, he cannot fail to be sustained under his trials, and, somehow or other, to come right at last; "in which case," say they who have hunted him down—"though we certainly don't expect it—nobody will be better pleased than we." Whereas, the world would do well to reflect that injustice is in itself, to every generous and properly-constituted mind, an injury of all others the most insufferable, the most torturing, and the most hard to bear; and that many clear consciences have gone to their account elsewhere, and many sound hearts have broken, because of this very reason; the knowledge of their own deserts only aggravating their sufferings, and rendering them the less endurable.

The world, however, was not in fault in Kit's case. But, Kit was innocent; and, knowing this, and feeling that his best friends deemed him guilty—that Mr. and Mrs. Garland would look upon him as a monster of ingratitude—that Barbara would associate him with all that was bad and criminal—that the pony would consider himself forsaken—and that even his own mother might perhaps yield to the strong appearances against him, and believe him to be the wretch he seemed—knowing and feeling all this, he experienced, at first, an agony of mind which no words can describe, and walked up and down the little cell in which he was locked up for the night, almost beside himself with grief.

Even when the violence of these emotions had in some degree subsided, and he was beginning to grow more calm, there came into his mind a new thought, the anguish of which was scarcely less. The child—the bright star of the simple fellow's life—she who always came back upon him like a beautiful dream—who had made the poorest part of his existence the happiest and best—who had ever been so gentle, and considerate, and good—if she were ever to hear of this, what would she think? As this idea occurred to him, the walls of the prison seemed to melt away, and the old place to reveal itself in their stead, as it was wont to be on winter

nights—the fireside, the little supper-table, the old man's hat, and coat, and stick—the half-opened door, leading to her little room—they were all there. And Nell herself was there, and he—both laughing heartily as they had often done—and, when he had got as far as this, Kit could go no farther, but flung himself upon his poor bedstead and wept.

It was a long night, which seemed as though it would have no end: but he slept too, and dreamed—always of being at liberty, and roving about, now with one person, and now with another, but ever with a vague dread of being recalled to prison; not that prison, but one which was in itself a dim idea—not of a place, but of a care and sorrow: of something oppressive and always present, and yet impossible to define. At last, the morning dawned, and there was the gaol itself—cold, black, and dreary, and very real indeed.

He was left to himself, however, and there was comfort in that. He had liberty to walk in a small paved yard at a certain hour, and learnt from the turnkey, who came to unlock his cell and show him where to wash, that there was a regular time for visiting every day, and that, if any of his friends came to see him, he would be fetched down to the grate. When he had given him this information, and a tin porringer containing his breakfast, the man locked him up again; and went clattering along the stone passage, opening and shutting a great many other doors, and raising numberless loud echoes which resounded through the building for a long time, as if they were in prison too, and unable to get out.

This turnkey had given him to understand that he was lodged, like some few others in the gaol, apart from the mass of prisoners; because he was not supposed to be utterly depraved and irreclaimable, and had never occupied apartments in that mansion before. Kit was thankful for this indulgence, and sat reading the Church Catechism very attentively (though he had known it by heart from a little child), until he heard the key in the lock, and the man entered again.

"Now then," he said, "come on!"

"Where to, sir?" asked Kit.

The man contented himself by briefly replying, "Wisitors;" and, taking him by the arm in exactly the same manner as the constable had done the day before, led him, through several winding ways and strong gates, into a passage, where he placed him at a grating and turned upon his heel. Beyond this grating, at the distance of about four or five feet, was another,

exactly like it. In the space between sat a turnkey reading a newspaper; and outside the further railing, Kit saw, with a palpitating heart, his mother with the baby in her arms; Barbara's mother with her never-failing umbrella; and poor little Jacob, staring in with all his might, as though he were looking for the bird, or the wild beast, and thought the men were mere accidents with whom the bars could have no possible concern.

But, when little Jacob saw his brother, and, thrusting his arms between the rails to hug him, found that he came no nearer, but still stood afar off with his head resting on the arm by which he held to one of the bars, he began to cry most piteously; whereupon Kit's mother and Barbara's mother, who had restrained themselves as much as possible, burst out sobbing and weeping afresh. Poor Kit could not help joining them, and not one of them could speak a word.

During this melancholy pause the turnkey read his newspaper with a waggish look (he had evidently got among the facetious paragraphs), until, happening to take his eyes off it for an instant, as if to get by dint of contemplation at the very marrow of some joke of a deeper sort than the rest, it appeared to occur to him, for the first time, that somebody was crying.

"Now, ladies, ladies," he said, looking round with surprise, "I'd advise you not to waste time like this. It's allowanced here, you know. You mustn't let that child make that noise either. It's against all rules."

"I'm his poor mother, sir," sobbed Mrs. Nubbles, curtsying humbly, "and this is his brother, sir. Oh dear me, dear me!"

"Well!" replied the turnkey, folding his paper on his knee, so as to get with greater convenience at the top of the next column. "It can't be helped, you know. He an't the only one in the same fix. You mustn't make a noise about it!"

With that, he went on reading. The man was not naturally cruel or hard-hearted. He had come to look upon felony as a kind of disorder, like the scarlet fever or erysipelas: some people had it—some hadn't—just as it might be.

"Oh! my darling Kit," said his mother, whom Barbara's mother had charitably relieved of the baby, "that I should see my poor boy here!"

"You don't believe I did what they accuse me of, mother dear?" cried Kit in a choking voice.

"I believe it!" exclaimed the poor woman, "I, that never knew you tell a lie, or do a

bad action from your cradle—that have never had a moment's sorrow on your account, except it was for the poor meals that you have taken with such good-humour and content, that I forgot how little there was, when I thought how kind and thoughtful you were, though you were but a child! I believe it of the son that's been a comfort to me from the hour of his birth to this time, and that I never laid down one night in anger with! I believe it of you, Kit?"

"Why, then, thank God!" said Kit, clutching the bars with an earnestness that shook them, "and I can bear it, mother! Come what may, I shall always have one drop of happiness in my heart when I think that you said that."

At this, the poor woman fell a crying again, and Barbara's mother too. And little Jacob, whose disjointed thoughts had by this time resolved themselves into a pretty distinct impression that Kit couldn't go out for a walk if he wanted, and that there were no birds, lions, tigers, or other natural curiosities behind those bars—nothing, indeed, but a caged brother—added his tears to theirs with as little noise as possible.

Kit's mother, drying her eyes (and moistening them, poor soul, more than she dried them), now took from the ground a small basket, and submissively addressed herself to the turnkey, saying, would he please to listen to her for a minute? The turnkey, being in the very crisis and passion of a joke, motioned to her with his hand to keep silent one minute longer, for her life. Nor did he remove his hand into its former posture, but kept it in the same warning attitude until he had finished the paragraph, when he paused for a few seconds, with a smile upon his face, as who should say, "This editor is a comical blade—a funny dog," and then asked her what she wanted.

"I have brought him a little something to eat," said the good woman. "If you please, sir, might he have it?"

"Yes, he may have it. There's no rule against that. Give it to me when you go, and I'll take care he has it."

"No, but if you please, sir—don't be angry with me, sir—I am his mother, and you had a mother once—if I might only see him eat a little bit, I should go away so much more satisfied that he was all comfortable."

And again the tears of Kit's mother burst forth, and of Barbara's mother, and of little Jacob. As to the baby, it was crowing and laughing with all its might—under the idea, apparently, that the whole scene had been invented and got up for its particular satisfaction.



The turnkey looked as if he thought the request a strange one, and rather out of the common way, but nevertheless he laid down his paper, and coming round to where Kit's mother stood, took the basket from her, and after inspecting its contents, handed it to Kit, and went back to his place. It may be easily conceived that the prisoner had no great appetite, but he sat down on the ground, and ate as hard as he could, while, at every morsel he put into his mouth, his mother sobbed and wept afresh, though with a softened grief that bespoke the satisfaction the sight afforded her.

While he was thus engaged, Kit made some anxious inquiries about his employers, and whether they had expressed any opinion concerning him; but all he could learn was, that Mr. Abel had himself broken the intelligence to his mother, with great kindness and delicacy, late on the previous night, but had himself expressed no opinion of his innocence or guilt. Kit was on the point of mustering courage to ask Barbara's mother about Barbara, when the turnkey who had conducted him reappeared, a second turnkey appeared behind his visitors, and the third turnkey with the newspaper cried, "Time's up!"—adding, in the same breath, "Now for the next party!" and then plunging deep into his newspaper again. Kit was taken off in an instant, with a blessing from his mother, and a scream from little Jacob, ringing in his ears. As he was crossing the next yard with the basket in his hand, under the guidance of his former conductor, another officer called to them to stop, and came up with a pint pot of porter in his hand.

"This is Christopher Nubbles, isn't it, that come in last night for felony?" said the man.

His comrade replied that this was the chicken in question.

"Then here's your beer," said the other man to Christopher. "What are you looking at? There an't a discharge in it."

"I beg your pardon," said Kit. "Who sent it me?"

"Why, your friend," replied the man. "You're to have it every day, he says. And so you will, if he pays for it."

"My friend!" repeated Kit.

"You're all abroad, seemingly," returned the other man. "There's his letter. Take hold!"

Kit took it, and, when he was locked up again, read as follows:

"Drink of this cup, you'll find there's a spell in its every drop 'gainst the ills of mortality. Talk of the cordial that sparkled for Helen! Her cup was a fiction, but this is reality

(Barclay and Co.'s). If they ever send it in a flat state, complain to the Governor. Yours, R. S."

"R. S.!" said Kit after some consideration. "It must be Mr. Richard Swiveller. Well, it's very kind of him, and I thank him heartily!"

## CHAPTER LXII.



FAINT light, twinkling from the window of the counting-house on Quilp's wharf, and looking inflamed and red through the night fog, as though it suffered from it like an eye, forewarned Mr. Sampson Brass, as he approached the wooden cabin with a cautious step, that the excellent proprietor, his esteemed client, was inside, and probably waiting with his accustomed patience and sweetness of temper the fulfilment of the appointment which now brought Mr. Brass within his fair domain.

"A treacherous place to pick one's steps in of a dark night," muttered Sampson as he stumbled for the twentieth time over some stray lumber, and limped in pain. "I believe that boy strews the ground differently every day, on purpose to bruise and maim one; unless his master does it with his own hands, which is more than likely. I hate to come to this place without Sally. She's more protection than a dozen men."

As he paid this compliment to the merit of the absent charmer, Mr. Brass came to a halt; looking doubtfully towards the light, and over his shoulder.

"What's he about, I wonder?" murmured the lawyer, standing on tiptoe, and endeavouring to obtain a glimpse of what was passing inside, which at that distance was impossible. "Drinking, I suppose,—making himself more fiery and furious, and heating his malice and mischievousness till they boil. I'm always afraid to come here by myself, when his account's a pretty large one. I don't believe he'd mind throttling me, and dropping me softly into the river, when the tide was at its strongest, any more than he'd mind killing a rat—indeed, I don't know whether he wouldn't consider it a pleasant joke. Hark! Now he's singing!"

Mr. Quilp was certainly entertaining himself with vocal exercise, but it was rather a kind of chant than a song; being a monotonous repetition of one sentence in a very rapid manner, with a long stress upon the last word, which he

swelled into a dismal roar. Nor did the burden of this performance bear any reference to love, or war, or wine, or loyalty, or any other the standard topics of song, but to a subject not often set to music or generally known in ballads; the words being these:—"The worthy magistrate, after remarking that the prisoner would find some difficulty in persuading a jury to believe his tale, committed him to take his trial at the approaching sessions; and directed the customary recognizances to be entered into for the pro-e-cu-tion."

Every time he came to this concluding word, and had exhausted all possible stress upon it, Quilp burst into a shriek of laughter, and began again.

"He's dreadfully imprudent," muttered Brass after he had listened to two or three repetitions of the chant. "Horribly imprudent. I wish he was dumb. I wish he was deaf. I wish he was blind. Hang him!" cried Brass as the chant began again. "I wish he was dead!"

Giving utterance to these friendly aspirations in behalf of his client, Mr. Sampson composed his face into its usual state of smoothness, and, waiting until the shriek came again and was dying away, went up to the wooden house, and knocked at the door.

"Come in!" cried the dwarf.

"How do you do to-night, sir?" said Sampson, peeping in. "Ha, ha, ha! How do you do, sir? Oh dear me, how very whimsical! Amazingly whimsical to be sure!"

"Come in, you fool!" returned the dwarf, "and don't stand there shaking your head and showing your teeth. Come in, you false witness, you perjurer, you suborner of evidence, come in!"

"He has the richest humour!" cried Brass, shutting the door behind him; "the most amazing vein of comicality! But isn't it *rather* injudicious, sir——"

"What?" demanded Quilp. "What, Judas?"

"Judas!" cried Brass. "He has such extraordinary spirits! His humour is so extremely playful! Judas! Oh yes—dear me, how very good! Ha, ha, ha!"

All this time Sampson was rubbing his hands, and staring, with ludicrous surprise and dismay, at a great, goggle-eyed, blunt nosed figure-head of some old ship, which was reared up against the wall in a corner near the stove, looking like a goblin or hideous idol whom the dwarf worshipped. A mass of timber on its head, carved into the dim and distant semblance of a cocked-hat, together with a representation of a star on the left breast and epaulets on the shoulders,

denoted that it was intended for the effigy of some famous admiral; but, without those helps, any observer might have supposed it the authentic portrait of a distinguished merman, or great sea-monster. Being originally much too large for the apartment which it was now employed to decorate, it had been sawn short off at the waist. Even in this state it reached from floor to ceiling; and thrusting itself forward, with that excessively wide-awake aspect, and air of somewhat obtrusive politeness, by which figure-heads are usually characterised, seemed to reduce everything else to mere pigmy proportions.

"Do you know it?" said the dwarf, watching Sampson's eyes. "Do you see the likeness?"

"Eh?" said Brass, holding his head on one side, and throwing it a little back, as connoisseurs do. "Now I look at it again, I fancy I see a—yes, there certainly is something in the smile that reminds me of—and yet, upon my word, I——"

Now, the fact was, that Sampson, having never seen anything in the smallest degree resembling this substantial phantom, was much perplexed; being uncertain whether Mr. Quilp considered it like himself, and had therefore bought it for a family portrait; or whether he was pleased to consider it as the likeness of some enemy. He was not very long in doubt; for, while he was surveying it with that knowing look which people assume when they are contemplating for the first time portraits which they ought to recognise, but don't, the dwarf threw down the newspaper from which he had been chanting the words already quoted, and seizing a rusty iron bar, which he used in lieu of poker, dealt the figure such a stroke on the nose that it rocked again.

"Is it like Kit—is it his picture, his image, his very self?" cried the dwarf, aiming a shower of blows at the insensible countenance, and covering it with deep dimples. "Is it the exact model and counterpart of the dog—is it—is it—is it?" And, with every repetition of the question, he battered the great image, until the perspiration streamed down his face with the violence of the exercise.

Although this might have been a very comical thing to look at from a secure gallery, as a bull-fight is found to be a comfortable spectacle by those who are not in the arena, and a house on fire is better than a play to people who don't live near it, there was something in the earnestness of Mr. Quilp's manner which made his legal adviser feel that the counting-house was a little too small, and a deal too lonely, for the com-



plete enjoyment of these humours. Therefore, he stood as far off as he could while the dwarf was thus engaged, whimpering out but feeble applause; and, when Quilp left off and sat down again from pure exhaustion, approached with more obsequiousness than ever.

"Excellent indeed!" cried Brass. "He, he! Oh, very good, sir! You know," said Sampson, looking round as if in appeal to the bruised admiral, "he's quite a remarkable man—quite!"

"Sit down," said the dwarf. "I bought the dog yesterday. I've been screwing gimlets into him, and sticking forks in his eyes, and cutting my name on him. I mean to burn him at last."

"Ha, ha!" cried Brass. "Extremely entertaining, indeed!"

"Come here!" said Quilp, beckoning him to draw near. "What's injudicious, hey?"

"Nothing, sir—nothing. Scarcely worth mentioning, sir; but I thought that song—admirably humorous in itself, you know—was perhaps ruder—"

"Yes," said Quilp, "rather what?"

"Just bordering, or as one may say remotely verging, upon the confines of injudiciousness, perhaps, sir," returned Brass, looking timidly at the dwarf's cunning eyes, which were turned towards the fire, and reflected its red light.

"Why?" inquired Quilp, without looking up.

"Why, you know, sir," returned Brass, venturing to be more familiar: "the fact is, sir, that any allusion to these little combinings together of friends, for objects in themselves extremely laudable, but which the law terms conspiracies, are—you take me, sir?—best kept snug and among friends, you know."

"Eh?" said Quilp, looking up with a perfectly vacant countenance. "What do you mean?"

"Cautious, exceedingly cautious, very right and proper!" cried Brass, nodding his head. "Mum, sir, even here—my meaning, sir, exactly."

"Your meaning exactly, you brazen scarecrow,—what's your meaning?" retorted Quilp. "Why do you talk to me of combining together? Do I combine? Do I know anything about your combinings?"

"No, no, sir—certainly not; not by any means," returned Brass.

"If you so wink and nod at me," said the dwarf, looking about him as if for his poker, "I'll spoil the expression of your monkey's face, I will."

"Don't put yourself out of the way I beg, sir," rejoined Brass, checking himself with great alacrity. "You're quite right, sir, quite right.

I shouldn't have mentioned the subject, sir. It's much better not to. You're quite right, sir. Let us change it, if you please. You were asking, sir, Sally told me, about our lodger. He has not returned, sir."

"No?" said Quilp, heating some rum in a little saucepan, and watching it to prevent its boiling over. "Why not?"

"Why, sir," returned Brass, "he—dear me, Mr. Quilp, sir—"

"What's the matter?" said the dwarf, stopping his hand in the act of carrying the saucepan to his mouth.

"You have forgotten the water, sir," said Brass. "And—excuse me, sir—but it's burning hot."

Deigning no other than a practical answer to this remonstrance, Mr. Quilp raised the hot saucepan to his lips, and deliberately drank off all the spirit it contained, which might have been in quantity about half a pint, and had been but a moment before, when he took it off the fire, bubbling and hissing fiercely. Having swallowed this gentle stimulant, and shaken his fist at the admiral, he bade Mr. Brass proceed.

"But first," said Quilp with his accustomed grin, "have a drop yourself—a nice drop—a good, warm, fiery drop."

"Why, sir," replied Brass, "if there was such a thing as a mouthful of water that could be got without trouble—"

"There's no such thing to be had here," cried the dwarf. "Water for lawyers! Melted lead and brimstone, you mean, nice hot blistering pitch and tar—that's the thing for them—eh, Brass, eh?"

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Mr. Brass. "Oh, very biting! and yet it's like being tickled—there's a pleasure in it too, sir!"

"Drink that," said the dwarf, who had by this time heated some more. "Toss it off, don't leave any heel-tap, scorch your throat and be happy!"

The wretched Sampson took a few short sips of the liquor, which immediately distilled itself into burning tears, and in that form came rolling down his cheeks into the pipkin again, turning the colour of his face and eyelids to a deep red, and giving rise to a violent fit of coughing, in the midst of which he was still heard to declare, with the constancy of a martyr, that it was "beautiful indeed!" While he was yet in unspeakable agonies, the dwarf renewed their conversation.

"The lodger," said Quilp, "what about him?"

"He is still, sir," returned Brass with intervals of coughing, "stopping with the Garland family. He has only been home once, sir, since the day

of the examination of that culprit. He informed Mr. Richard, sir, that he couldn't bear the house after what had taken place; that he was wretched in it; and that he looked upon himself as being in a certain kind of way the cause of the occurrence.—A very excellent lodger, sir. I hope we may not lose him.”

“Yah!” cried the dwarf. “Never thinking of anybody but yourself. Why don't you retrench, then—scrape up, hoard, economise, eh?”

“Why, sir,” replied Brass, “upon my word I

think Sarah's as good an economiser as any going. I do indeed, Mr. Quilp.”

“Moisten your clay, wet the other eye, drink, man!” cried the dwarf. “You took a clerk to oblige me.”

“Delighted, sir, I am sure, at any time,” replied Sampson. “Yes, sir, I did.”

“Then, now you may discharge him,” said Quilp. “There's a means of retrenchment for you at once.”

“Discharge Mr. Richard, sir?” cried Brass.



“IS IT LIKE KIT—IS IT HIS PICTURE, HIS IMAGE, HIS VERY SELF?”

“Have you more than one clerk, you parrot, that you ask the question? Yes.”

“Upon my word, sir,” said Brass, “I wasn't prepared for this—”

“How could you be,” sneered the dwarf, “when I wasn't? How often am I to tell you that I brought him to you that I might always have my eye on him and know where he was—and that I had a plot, a scheme, a little quiet piece of enjoyment afoot, of which the very

cream and essence was, that this old man and grandchild (who have sunk underground I think) should be, while he and his precious friend believed them rich, in reality as poor as frozen rats.”

“I quite understood that, sir,” rejoined Brass. “Thoroughly.”

“Well, sir,” retorted Quilp, “and do you understand now, that they're *not* poor—that they can't be, if they have such men as your



lodger searching for them, and scouring the country far and wide?"

"Of course I do, sir," said Sampson.

"Of course you do!" retorted the dwarf, viciously snapping at his words. "Of course do you understand, then, that it's no matter what comes of this fellow? Of course do you understand that for any other purpose he's no man for me, nor for you?"

"I have frequently said to Sarah, sir," returned Brass, "that he was of no use at all in the business. You can't put any confidence in him, sir. If you'll believe me, I've found that fellow, in the commonest little matters of the office that have been trusted to him, blurring out the truth, though expressly cautioned. The aggravation of that chap, sir, has exceeded anything you can imagine, it has indeed. Nothing but the respect and obligation I owe to you, sir——"

As it was plain that Sampson was bent on a complimentary harangue, unless he received a timely interruption, Mr. Quilp politely tapped him on the crown of his head with the little saucepan, and requested that he would be so obliging as to hold his peace.

"Practical, sir, practical," said Brass, rubbing the place and smiling; "but still extremely pleasant—immensely so!"

"Hearken to me, will you?" returned Quilp, "or I'll be a little more pleasant presently. There's no chance of his comrade and friend returning. The scamp has been obliged to fly, as I learn, for some knavery, and has found his way abroad. Let him rot there."

"Certainly, sir. Quite proper.—Forcible!" cried Brass, glancing at the admiral again, as if he made a third in company. "Extremely forcible!"

"I hate him," said Quilp between his teeth, "and have always hated him, for family reasons. Besides he was an intractable ruffian; otherwise *he* would have been of use. This fellow is pigeon-hearted, and light-headed. I don't want him any longer. Let him hang or drown—starve—go to the devil."

"By all means, sir," returned Brass. "When would you wish him, sir,—to—ha, ha!—to make that little excursion?"

"When this trial's over," said Quilp. "As soon as that's ended, send him about his business."

"It shall be done, sir," returned Brass; "by all means. It will be rather a blow to Sarah, sir, but she has all her feelings under control. Ah, Mr. Quilp, I often think, sir, if it had only pleased Providence to bring you and Sarah

together in earlier life, what blessed results would have flowed from such a union! You never saw our dear father, sir?—A charming gentleman. Sarah was his pride and joy, sir. He would have closed his eyes in bliss, would Foxey, Mr. Quilp, if he could have found her such a partner. You esteem her, sir?"

"I love her," croaked the dwarf.

"You're very good, sir," returned Brass, "I am sure. Is there any other order, sir, that I can take a note of, besides this little matter of Mr. Richard?"

"None," replied the dwarf, seizing the saucepan. "Let us drink the lovely Sarah."

"If we could do it in something, sir, that wasn't quite boiling," suggested Brass humbly, "perhaps it would be better. I think it will be more agreeable to Sarah's feelings, when she comes to hear from me of the honour you have done her, if she learns it was in liquor rather cooler than the last, sir."

But to these remonstrances Mr. Quilp turned a deaf ear. Sampson Brass, who was, by this time, anything but sober, being compelled to take further draughts of the same strong bowl, found that, instead of at all contributing to his recovery, they had the novel effect of making the counting-house spin round and round with extreme velocity, and causing the floor and ceiling to heave in a very distressing manner. After a brief stupor, he awoke to a consciousness of being partly under the table, and partly under the grate. This position not being the most comfortable one he could have chosen for himself, he managed to stagger to his feet, and, holding on by the admiral, looked round for his host.

Mr. Brass's first impression was, that his host was gone, and had left him there alone—perhaps locked him in for the night. A strong smell of tobacco, however, suggesting a new train of ideas, he looked upward, and saw that the dwarf was smoking in his hammock.

"Good-bye, sir," cried Brass faintly. "Good-bye, sir."

"Won't you stop all night?" said the dwarf, peeping out. "Do stop all night!"

"I couldn't indeed, sir," replied Brass, who was almost dead from nausea and the closeness of the room. "If you'd have the goodness to show me a light, so that I may see my way across the yard, sir——"

Quilp was out in an instant; not with his legs first, or his head first, or his arms first, but bodily—altogether.

"To be sure," he said, taking up a lantern, which was now the only light in the place.

"Be careful how you go, my dear friend. Be sure to pick your way among the timber, for all the rusty nails are upwards. There's a dog in the lane. He bit a man last night, and a woman the night before, and last Tuesday he killed a child—but that was in play. Don't go too near him."

"Which side of the road is he, sir?" asked Brass in great dismay.

"He lives on the right hand," said Quilp, "but sometimes he hides on the left, ready for a spring. He's uncertain in that respect. Mind you take care of yourself. I'll never forgive you if you don't. There's the light out—never mind—you know the way—straight on!"

Quilp had slyly shaded the light by holding it against his breast, and now stood chuckling and shaking from head to foot in a rapture of delight, as he heard the lawyer stumbling up the yard, and now and then falling heavily down. At length, however, he got quit of the place, and was out of hearing.

The dwarf shut himself up again, and sprang once more into his hammock.

### CHAPTER LXIII.

**T**HE professional gentleman who had given Kit that consolatory piece of information relative to the settlement of his trifle of business at the Old Bailey, and the probability of its being very soon disposed of, turned out to be quite correct in his prognostications. In eight days' time the sessions commenced. In one day afterwards, the Grand Jury found a True Bill against Christopher Nubbles for felony; and, in two days from that finding, the aforesaid Christopher Nubbles was called upon to plead Guilty or Not Guilty to an Indictment for that he the said Christopher did feloniously abstract and steal from the dwelling-house and office of one Sampson Brass, gentleman, one Bank Note for Five Pounds issued by the Governor and Company of the Bank of England; in contravention of the Statutes in that case made and provided, and against the peace of our Sovereign Lord the King, his crown, and dignity.

To this indictment, Christopher Nubbles, in a low and trembling voice, pleaded Not Guilty: and here, let those who are in the habit of forming hasty judgments from appearances, and who would have had Christopher, if innocent, speak out very strong and loud, observe, that confine-

ment and anxiety will subdue the stoutest hearts; and that to one who has been close shut up, though it be only for ten or eleven days, seeing but stone walls and a very few stony faces, the sudden entrance into a great hall filled with life is a rather disconcerting and startling circumstance. To this it must be added, that life in a wig is, to a large class of people, much more terrifying and impressive than life with its own head of hair; and if, in addition to these considerations, there be taken into account Kit's natural emotion on seeing the two Mr. Garlands and the little notary looking on with pale and anxious faces, it will perhaps seem matter of no very great wonder that he should have been rather out of sorts, and unable to make himself quite at home.

Although he had never seen either of the Mr. Garlands, or Mr. Witherden, since the time of his arrest, he had been given to understand that they had employed counsel for him. Therefore, when one of the gentlemen in wigs got up and said, "I am for the prisoner, my Lord," Kit made him a bow; and when another gentleman in a wig got up and said, "And I'm against him, my Lord," Kit trembled very much, and bowed to him too. And didn't he hope in his own heart that his gentleman was a match for the other gentleman, and would make him ashamed of himself in no time!

The gentleman who was against him had to speak first, and being in dreadfully good spirits (for he had, in the last trial, very nearly procured the acquittal of a young gentleman who had had the misfortune to murder his father), he spoke up, you may be sure; telling the Jury that if they acquitted this prisoner they must expect to suffer no less pangs and agonies than he had told the other Jury they would certainly undergo if they convicted that prisoner. And when he had told them all about the case, and that he had never known a worse case, he stopped a little while, like a man who had something terrible to tell them, and then said that he understood an attempt would be made by his learned friend (and here he looked sideways at Kit's gentleman) to impeach the testimony of those immaculate witnesses whom he should call before them; but he did hope and trust that his learned friend would have a greater respect and veneration for the character of the prosecutor; than whom, as he well knew, there did not exist, and never had existed, a more honourable member of that most honourable profession to which he was attached. And then he said, did the Jury know Bevis Marks? And if they did know Bevis Marks (as he trusted, for



their own characters, they did), did they know the historical and elevating associations connected with that most remarkable spot? Did they believe that a man like Brass could reside in a place like Bevis Marks, and not be a virtuous and most upright character? And when he had said a great deal to them on this point, he remembered that it was an insult to their understandings to make any remarks on what they must have felt so strongly without him, and therefore called Sampson Brass into the witness-box straightway.

Then up comes Mr. Brass, very brisk and fresh; and, having bowed to the judge, like a man who has had the pleasure of seeing him before, and who hopes he has been pretty well since their last meeting, folds his arms, and looks at his gentleman as much as to say, "Here I am—full of evidence—tap me!" And the gentleman does tap him presently, and with great discretion too; drawing off the evidence by little and little, and making it run quite clear and bright in the eyes of all present. Then, Kit's gentleman takes him in hand, but can make nothing of him; and, after a great many very long questions and very short answers, Mr. Sampson Brass goes down in glory.

To him succeeds Sarah, who in like manner is easy to be managed by Mr. Brass's gentleman, but very obdurate to Kit's. In short, Kit's gentleman can get nothing out of her but a repetition of what she has said before (only a little stronger this time, as against his client), and therefore lets her go, in some confusion. Then, Mr. Brass's gentleman calls Richard Swiveller, and Richard Swiveller appears accordingly.

Now, Mr. Brass's gentleman has it whispered in his ear that this witness is disposed to be friendly to the prisoner—which, to say the truth, he is rather glad to hear, as his strength is considered to lie in what is familiarly termed badgering. Wherefore, he begins by requesting the officer to be quite sure that this witness kisses the book, and then goes to work at him, tooth and nail.

"Mr. Swiveller," says this gentleman to Dick when he has told his tale with evident reluctance, and a desire to make the best of it: "pray, sir, where did you dine yesterday?"—"Where did I dine yesterday?"—"Ay, sir, where did you dine yesterday—was it near here, sir?"—"Oh, to be sure!—yes—just over the way." "To be sure. Yes. Just over the way," repeats Mr. Brass's gentleman with a glance at the Court. "Alone, sir?"—"I beg your pardon," says Mr. Swiveller, who has not caught the

question.—"Alone, sir?" repeats Mr. Brass's gentleman in a voice of thunder; "did you dine alone? Did you treat anybody, sir? Come!"—"Oh yes, to be sure!—yes, I did," says Mr. Swiveller with a smile. "Have the goodness to banish a levity, sir, which is very ill suited to the place in which you stand (though perhaps you have reason to be thankful that it's only that place)," says Mr. Brass's gentleman with a nod of the head, insinuating that the dock is Mr. Swiveller's legitimate sphere of action; "and attend to me. You were waiting about here, yesterday, in expectation that this trial was coming on. You dined over the way. You treated somebody. Now, was that somebody brother to the prisoner at the bar?"—Mr. Swiveller is proceeding to explain—"Yes or No, sir?" cries Mr. Brass's gentleman.—"But will you allow me——"—"Yes or No, sir?"—"Yes, it was, but——"—"Yes, it was," cries the gentleman, taking him up short. "And a very pretty witness *you* are!"

Down sits Mr. Brass's gentleman. Kit's gentleman, not knowing how the matter really stands, is afraid to pursue the subject. Richard Swiveller retires abashed. Judge, Jury, and spectators have visions of his lounging about with an ill-looking, large-whiskered, dissolute young fellow of six feet high. The reality is, little Jacob, with the calves of his legs exposed to the open air, and himself tied up in a shawl. Nobody knows the truth; everybody believes a falsehood; and all because of the ingenuity of Mr. Brass's gentleman.

Then come the witnesses to character, and here Mr. Brass's gentleman shines again. It turns out that Mr. Garland has had no character with Kit, no recommendation of him, but from his own mother, and that he was suddenly dismissed by his former master for unknown reasons. "Really, Mr. Garland," says Mr. Brass's gentleman, "for a person who has arrived at your time of life, you are, to say the least of it, singularly indiscreet, I think." The Jury think so too, and find Kit guilty. He is taken off, humbly protesting his innocence. The spectators settle themselves in their places with renewed attention, for there are several female witnesses to be examined in the next case, and it has been rumoured that Mr. Brass's gentleman will make great fun in cross-examining them for the prisoner.

Kit's mother, poor woman, is waiting at the grate below-stairs, accompanied by Barbara's mother (who, honest soul! never does anything but cry and hold the baby), and a sad interview ensues. The newspaper-reading turnkey has

told them all. He don't think it will be transportation for life, because there's time to prove the good character yet, and that is sure to serve him. He wonders what he did it for. "He never did it!" cries Kit's mother. "Well," says the turnkey, "I won't contradict you. It's all one now, whether he did it or not."

Kit's mother can reach his hand through the bars, and she clasps it—God, and those to whom He has given such tenderness, only know in how much agony. Kit bids her keep a good heart, and, under pretence of having the children lifted up to kiss him, prays Barbara's mother in a whisper to take her home.

"Some friend will rise up for us, mother," cries Kit, "I am sure. If not now, before long. My innocence will come out, mother, and I shall be brought back again; I feel a confidence in that. You must teach little Jacob and the baby how all this was, for if they thought I had ever been dishonest, when they grew old enough to understand, it would break my heart to know it, if I was thousands of miles away.—Oh! is there no good gentleman here who will take care of her?"

The hand slips out of his, for the poor creature sinks down upon the earth insensible. Richard Swiveller comes hastily up, elbows the bystanders out of the way, takes her (after some trouble) in one arm after the manner of theatrical ravishers, and, nodding to Kit, and commanding Barbara's mother to follow, for he has a coach waiting, bears her swiftly off.

Well! Richard took her home. And what astonishing absurdities, in the way of quotation from song and poem, he perpetrated on the road, no man knows. He took her home, and stayed till she was recovered; and, having no money to pay the coach, went back in state to Bevis Marks, bidding the driver (for it was Saturday night) wait at the door while he went in for "change."

"Mr. Richard, sir," said Brass cheerfully, "good evening!"

Monstrous as Kit's tale had appeared at first, Mr. Richard did, that night, half suspect his affable employer of some deep villainy. Perhaps it was but the misery he had just witnessed which gave his careless nature this impulse; but, be that as it may, it was very strong upon him, and he said in as few words as possible what he wanted.

"Money?" cried Brass, taking out his purse. "Ha, ha! To be sure, Mr. Richard, to be sure, sir. All men must live. You haven't change for a five-pound note, have you, sir?"

"No," returned Dick, shortly.

"Oh!" said Brass, "here's the very sum. That saves trouble. You're very welcome I'm sure.—Mr. Richard, sir——"

Dick, who had by this time reached the door, turned round.

"You needn't," said Brass, "trouble yourself to come back any more, sir."

"Eh?"

"You see, Mr. Richard," said Brass, thrusting his hands in his pockets, and rocking himself to and fro on his stool, "the fact is, that a man of your abilities is lost, sir, quite lost, in our dry and mouldy line. It's terrible drudgery—shocking. I should say, now, that the stage, or the—or the army, Mr. Richard—or something very superior in the licensed victualling way—was the kind of thing that would call out the genius of such a man as you. I hope you'll look in to see us now and then. Sally, sir, will be delighted I'm sure. She's extremely sorry to lose you, Mr. Richard, but a sense of her duty to society reconciles her. An amazing creature that, sir! You'll find the money quite correct, I think. There's a cracked window, sir, but I've not made any deduction on that account. Whenever we part with friends, Mr. Richard, let us part liberally. A delightful sentiment, sir!"

To all these rambling observations Mr. Swiveller answered not one word, but, returning for the aquatic jacket, rolled it into a tight round ball: looking steadily at Brass meanwhile, as if he had some intention of bowling him down with it. He only took it under his arm, however, and marched out of the office in profound silence. When he had closed the door, he reopened it, stared in again for a few moments with the same portentous gravity, and nodding his head once, in a slow and ghost-like manner, vanished.

He paid the coachman, and turned his back on Bevis Marks, big with great designs for the comforting of Kit's mother and the aid of Kit himself.

But, the lives of gentlemen devoted to such pleasures as Richard Swiveller are extremely precarious. The spiritual excitement of the last fortnight, working upon a system affected in no slight degree by the spirituous excitement of some years, proved a little too much for him. That very night Mr. Richard was seized with an alarming illness, and in twenty-four hours was stricken with a raging fever.



## CHAPTER LXIV.

**T**OSSING to and fro upon his hot, uneasy bed; tormented by a fierce thirst which nothing could appease; unable to find, in any change of posture, a moment's peace or ease; and rambling, ever, through deserts of thought where there was no resting-place, no sight or sound suggestive of refreshment or repose, nothing but a dull eternal weariness, with no change but the restless shiftings of his miserable body, and the weary wanderings of his mind, constant still to one ever-present anxiety—to a sense of something left undone, of some fearful obstacle to be surmounted, of some carking care that would not be driven away, and which haunted the distempered brain, now in this form, now in that, always shadowy and dim, but recognisable for the same phantom in every shape it took: darkening every vision like an evil conscience, and making slumber horrible—in these slow tortures of his dread disease, the unfortunate Richard lay wasting and consuming inch by inch, until, at last, when he seemed to fight and struggle to rise up, and to be held down by devils, he sank into a deep sleep, and dreamed no more.

He awoke. With a sensation of most blissful rest, better than sleep itself, he began gradually to remember something of these sufferings, and to think what a long night it had been, and whether he had not been delirious twice or thrice. Happening, in the midst of these cogitations, to raise his hand, he was astonished to find how heavy it seemed, and yet how thin and light it really was. Still, he felt indifferent and happy; and, having no curiosity to pursue the subject, remained in the same waking slumber until his attention was attracted by a cough. This made him doubt whether he had locked his door last night, and feel a little surprised at having a companion in the room. Still he lacked energy to follow up this train of thought; and unconsciously fell, in a luxury of repose, to staring at some green stripes on the bed-furniture, and associating them strangely with patches of fresh turf, while the yellow ground between made gravel-walks, and so helped out a long perspective of trim gardens.

He was rambling in imagination on these terraces, and had quite lost himself among them, indeed, when he heard the cough once more. The walks shrunk into stripes again at the sound; and raising himself a little in the bed, and holding the curtain open with one hand, he looked out.

The same room certainly, and still by candle-light; but with what unbounded astonishment did he see all those bottles, and basins, and articles of linen airing by the fire, and such-like furniture of a sick chamber—all very clean and neat, but all quite different from anything he had left there when he went to bed! The atmosphere, too, filled with a cool smell of herbs and vinegar; the floor newly sprinkled; the—the what? The Marchioness?

Yes; playing cribbage with herself at the table. There she sat, intent upon her game, coughing now and then in a subdued manner as if she feared to disturb him—shuffling the cards, cutting, dealing, playing, counting, pegging—going through all the mysteries of cribbage as if she had been in full practice from her cradle!

Mr. Swiveller contemplated these things for a short time, and, suffering the curtain to fall into its former position, laid his head on the pillow again.

"I'm dreaming," thought Richard, "that's clear. When I went to bed, my hands were not made of egg-shells; and now I can almost see through 'em. If this is not a dream, I have woke up, by mistake, in an Arabian Night, instead of a London one. But I have no doubt I'm asleep. Not the least."

Here the small servant had another cough.

"Very remarkable!" thought Mr. Swiveller. "I never dreamt such a real cough as that before. I don't know, indeed, that I ever dreamt either a cough or a sneeze. Perhaps it's part of the philosophy of dreams that one never does. There's another—and another—I say!—I'm dreaming rather fast!"

For the purpose of testing his real condition, Mr. Swiveller, after some reflection, pinched himself in the arm.

"Queerer still!" he thought. "I came to bed rather plump than otherwise, and now there's nothing to lay hold of. I'll take another survey."

The result of this additional inspection was, to convince Mr. Swiveller that the objects by which he was surrounded were real, and that he saw them, beyond all question, with his waking eyes.

"It's an Arabian Night; that's what it is," said Richard. "I'm in Damascus or Grand Cairo. The Marchioness is a Genie, and having had a wager with another Genie about who is the handsomest young man alive, and the worthiest to be the husband of the Princess of China, has brought me away, room and all, to compare us together. Perhaps," said Mr. Swiveller, turning languidly round on his pillow, and looking on that side of his bed which was next the

wall, "the Princess may be still— No, she's gone."

Not feeling quite satisfied with this explanation, as, even taking it to be the correct one, it still involved a little mystery and doubt, Mr. Swiveller raised the curtain again, determined to take the first favourable opportunity of addressing his companion. An occasion soon presented itself. The Marchioness dealt, turned up a knave, and omitted to take the usual advantage; upon which Mr. Swiveller called out as loud as he could—"Two for his heels!"

The Marchioness jumped up quickly, and clapped her hands. "Arabian Nights, certainly," thought Mr. Swiveller; "they always clap their hands instead of ringing the bell. Now for the two thousand black slaves, with jars of jewels on their heads!"

It appeared, however, that she had only clapped her hands for joy; as, directly afterwards, she began to laugh, and then to cry; declaring, not in choice Arabic, but in familiar English, that she was "so glad, she didn't know what to do."

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller thoughtfully, "be pleased to draw nearer. First of all, will you have the goodness to inform me where I shall find my voice; and secondly, what has become of my flesh?"

The Marchioness only shook her head mournfully, and cried again; whereupon Mr. Swiveller (being very weak) felt his own eyes affected likewise.

"I begin to infer, from your manner and these appearances, Marchioness," said Richard after a pause, and smiling with a trembling lip, "that I have been ill."

"You just have!" replied the small servant, wiping her eyes. "And haven't you been a talking nonsense!"

"Oh!" said Dick. "Very ill, Marchioness, have I been?"

"Dead, all but," replied the small servant. "I never thought you'd get better. Thank Heaven you have!"

Mr. Swiveller was silent for a long while. By-and-by he began to talk again: inquiring how long he had been there.

"Three weeks to-morrow," replied the small servant.

"Three what?" said Dick.

"Weeks," returned the Marchioness emphatically; "three long, slow weeks."

The bare thought of having been in such extremity caused Richard to fall into another silence, and to lie flat down again at his full length. The Marchioness, having arranged the bedclothes more comfortably, and felt that his

hands and forehead were quite cool—a discovery that filled her with delight—cried a little more, and then applied herself to getting tea ready, and making some thin dry toast.

While she was thus engaged, Mr. Swiveller looked on with a grateful heart, very much astonished to see how thoroughly at home she made herself, and attributing this attention, in its origin, to Sally Brass, whom, in his own mind, he could not thank enough. When the Marchioness had finished her toasting, she spread a clean cloth on a tray, and brought him some crisp slices and a great basin of weak tea, with which (she said) the doctor had left word he might refresh himself when he awoke. She propped him up with pillows, if not as skilfully as if she had been a professional nurse all her life, at least as tenderly; and looked on with unutterable satisfaction while the patient—stopping every now and then to shake her by the hand—took his poor meal with an appetite and relish, which the greatest dainties of the earth, under any other circumstances, would have failed to provoke. Having cleared away, and disposed everything comfortably about him again, she sat down at the table to take her own tea.

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, "how's Sally?"

The small servant screwed her face into an expression of the very uttermost entanglement of slyness, and shook her head.

"What, haven't you seen her lately?" said Dick.

"Seen her!" cried the small servant. "Bless you, I've run away!"

Mr. Swiveller immediately laid himself down again quite flat, and so remained for about five minutes. By slow degrees he resumed his sitting posture after that lapse of time, and inquired:

"And where do you live, Marchioness?"

"Live!" cried the small servant. "Here!"

"Oh!" said Mr. Swiveller.

And with that he fell down flat again, as suddenly as if he had been shot. Thus he remained, motionless and bereft of speech, until she had finished her meal, put everything in its place, and swept the hearth; when he motioned her to bring a chair to the bedside, and, being propped up again, opened a farther conversation.

"And so," said Dick, "you have run away?"

"Yes," said the Marchioness, "and they've been a tizing of me."

"Been—I beg your pardon," said Dick—"what have they been doing?"

"Been a tizing of me—tizing you know—in the newspapers," rejoined the Marchioness.



"Ay, ay," said Dick, "advertising?"

The small servant nodded, and winked. Her eyes were so red with waking and crying, that the Tragic Muse might have winked with greater consistency. And so Dick felt.

"Tell me," said he, "how it was that you thought of coming here."

"Why, you see," returned the Marchioness, "when you was gone, I hadn't any friend at all, because the lodger he never come back, and I didn't know where either him or you was to be found, you know. But one morning, when I was——"

"Was near a keyhole?" suggested Mr. Swiveller, observing that she faltered.

"Well, then," said the small servant, nodding; "when I was near the office keyhole—as you see me through, you know—I heard somebody saying that she lived here, and was the lady whose house you lodged at, and that you was took very bad, and wouldn't nobody come and take care of you. Mr. Brass, he says, 'It's no business of mine,' he says; and Miss Sally, she says, 'He's a funny chap, but it's no business of mine;' and the lady went away, and slammed the door to, when she went out, I can tell you. So I ran away that night, and come here, and told 'em you was my brother, and they believed me, and I've been here ever since."

"This poor little Marchioness has been wearing herself to death!" cried Dick.

"No, I haven't," she returned, "not a bit of it. Don't you mind about me. I like sitting up, and I've often had a sleep, bless you, in one of them chairs. But if you could have seen how you tried to jump out o' window, and if you could have heard how you used to keep on singing and making speeches, you wouldn't have believed it. I'm so glad you're better, Mr. Liverer."

"Liverer, indeed!" said Dick thoughtfully. "It's well I *am* a liverer. I strongly suspect I should have died, Marchioness, but for you."

At this point Mr. Swiveller took the small servant's hand in his again, and being, as we have seen, but poorly, might, in struggling to express his thanks, have made his eyes as red as hers, but that she quickly changed the theme by making him lie down, and urging him to keep very quiet.

"The doctor," she told him, "said you was to keep quite still, and there was to be no noise nor nothing. Now take a rest, and then we'll talk again. I'll sit by you, you know. If you shut your eyes, perhaps you'll go to sleep. You'll be all the better for it if you do."

The Marchioness, in saying these words,

brought a little table to the bedside, took her seat at it, and began to work away at the concoction of some cooling drink with the address of a score of chemists. Richard Swiveller, being indeed fatigued, fell into a slumber, and, waking in about half an hour, inquired what time it was.

"Just gone half-after six," replied his small friend, helping him to sit up again.

"Marchioness," said Richard, passing his hand over his forehead and turning suddenly round, as though the subject but that moment flashed upon him, "what has become of Kit?"

He had been sentenced to transportation for a great many years, she said.

"Has he gone?" asked Dick. "His mother—how is she—what has become of her?"

His nurse shook her head, and answered that she knew nothing about them. "But if I thought," said she, very slowly, "that you'd keep quiet, and not put yourself into another fever, I could tell you—but I won't now."

"Yes, do," said Dick. "It will amuse me."

"Oh! would it, though?" rejoined the small servant with a horrified look. "I know better than that. Wait till you're better, and then I'll tell you."

Dick looked very earnestly at his little friend: and his eyes, being large and hollow from illness, assisted the expression so much, that she was quite frightened, and besought him not to think any more about it. What had already fallen from her, however, had not only piqued his curiosity, but seriously alarmed him, wherefore he urged her to tell him the worst at once.

"Oh! there's no worst in it," said the small servant. "It hasn't anything to do with you."

"Has it anything to do with—is it anything you heard through chinks or keyholes—and that you were not intended to hear?" asked Dick in a breathless state.

"Yes," replied the small servant.

"In—in Bevis Marks?" pursued Dick hastily.

"Conversations between Brass and Sally?"

"Yes," cried the small servant again.

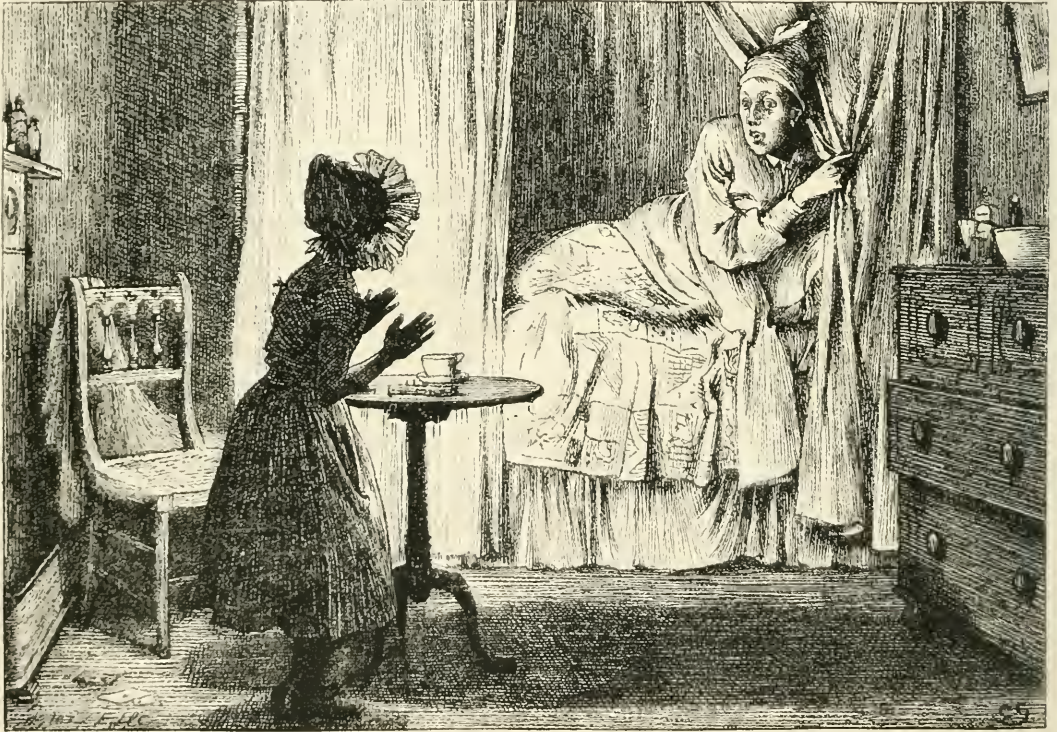
Richard Swiveller thrust his lank arm out of bed, and, griping her by the wrist and drawing her close to him, bade her out with it, and freely too, or he would not answer for the consequences; being wholly unable to endure that state of excitement and expectation. She, seeing that he was greatly agitated, and that the effects of postponing her revelation might be much more injurious than any that were likely to ensue from its being made at once, promised compliance, on condition that the patient kept himself perfectly quiet, and abstained from starting up or tossing about.

"But, if you begin to do that," said the small servant, "I'll leave off. And so I tell you."

"You can't leave off till you have gone on," said Dick. "And do go on, there's a darling. Speak, sister, speak. Pretty Polly, say. Oh, tell me when, and tell me where, pray, Marchioness, I beseech you!"

Unable to resist these fervent adjurations, which Richard Swiveller poured out as passionately as if they had been of the most solemn and tremendous nature, his companion spoke thus :

"Well! Before I run away, I used to sleep in the kitchen—where we played cards, you know. Miss Sally used to keep the key of the kitchen door in her pocket, and she always come down at night to take away the candle and rake out the fire. When she had done that, she left me to go to bed in the dark, locked the door on the outside, put the key in her pocket again, and kept me locked up till she come down in the morning—very early I can tell you—and let me out. I was terrible afraid of being kept like this, because, if there was a fire, I



"THE MARCHIONESS JUMPED UP QUICKLY, AND CLAPPED HER HANDS."

thought they might forget me, and only take care of themselves, you know. So, whenever I see an old rusty key anywhere, I picked it up, and tried if it would fit the door, and at last I found in the dust-cellar a key that *did* fit it."

Here Mr. Swiveller made a violent demonstration with his legs. But the small servant immediately pausing in her talk, he subsided again, and, pleading a momentary forgetfulness of their compact, entreated her to proceed.

"They kept me very short," said the small servant. "Oh! you can't think how short they

kept me! So I used to come out at night after they'd gone to bed, and feel about in the dark for bits of biscuit, or sangwitches that you'd left in the office, or even pieces of orange-peel to put into cold water and make believe it was wine. Did you ever taste orange-peel and water?"

Mr. Swiveller replied that he had never tasted that ardent liquor; and once more urged his friend to resume the thread of her narrative.

"If you make believe very much, it's quite nice," said the small servant; "but if you don't,



you know, it seems as if it would bear a little more seasoning, certainly. Well, sometimes I used to come out after they'd gone to bed, and sometimes before, you know; and one or two nights before there was all that precious noise in the office—when the young man was took, I mean—I come up-stairs while Mr. Brass and Miss Sally was a sittin' at the office fire; and I'll tell you the truth, that I come to listen again about the key of the safe."

Mr. Swiveller gathered up his knees so as to make a great cone of the bedclothes, and conveyed into his countenance an expression of the utmost concern. But, the small servant pausing, and holding up her finger, the cone gently disappeared, though the look of concern did not.

"There was him and her," said the small servant, "a sittin' by the fire, and talking softly together. Mr. Brass says to Miss Sally, 'Upon my word,' he says, 'it's a dangerous thing, and it might get us into a world of trouble, and I don't half like it.' She says—you know her way—she says, 'You're the chickenest-hearted, feeblest, faintest man I ever see, and I think,' she says, 'that I ought to have been the brother, and you the sister. Isn't Quilp,' she says, 'our principal support?' 'He certainly is,' says Mr. Brass. 'And an't we,' she says, 'constantly ruining somebody or other in the way of business?' 'We certainly are,' says Mr. Brass. 'Then does it signify,' she says, 'about ruining this Kit when Quilp desires it?' 'It certainly does not signify,' says Mr. Brass. Then, they whispered and laughed for a long time about there being no danger if it was well done, and then Mr. Brass pulls out his pocket-book, and says, 'Well,' he says, 'here it is—Quilp's own five-pound note. We'll agree that way, then,' he says. 'Kit's coming to-morrow morning, I know. While he's up-stairs, you'll get out of the way, and I'll clear off Mr. Richard. Having Kit alone, I'll hold him in conversation, and put this property in his hat. I'll manage so, besides,' he says, 'that Mr. Richard shall find it there, and be the evidence. And if that don't get Christopher out of Mr. Quilp's way, and satisfy Mr. Quilp's grudges,' he says, 'the Devil's in it.' Miss Sally laughed, and said that was the plan, and as they seemed to be moving away, and I was afraid to stop any longer, I went down-stairs again.—There!"

The small servant had gradually worked herself into as much agitation as Mr. Swiveller, and therefore made no effort to restrain him when he sat up in bed and hastily demanded whether this story had been told to anybody.

THE OLD CURIOSITY SHOP, 16.

"How could it be?" replied his nurse. "I was almost afraid to think about it, and hoped the young man would be let off. When I heard 'em say they had found him guilty of what he didn't do, you was gone, and so was the lodger—though I think I should have been frightened to tell him, even if he'd been there. Ever since I come here, you've been out of your senses, and what would have been the good of telling you then?"

"Marchioness," said Mr. Swiveller, plucking off his nightcap, and flinging it to the other end of the room; "if you'll do me the favour to retire for a few minutes, and see what sort of a night it is, I'll get up."

"You mustn't think of such a thing," cried his nurse.

"I must indeed," said the patient, looking round the room. "Whereabouts are my clothes?"

"Oh, I'm so glad—you haven't got any!" replied the Marchioness.

"Ma'am!" said Mr. Swiveller in great astonishment.

"I've been obliged to sell them, every one, to get the things that was ordered for you. But don't take on about that," urged the Marchioness, as Dick fell back upon his pillow. "You're too weak to stand, indeed."

"I am afraid," said Richard dolefully, "that you're right. What ought I to do? What is to be done?"

It naturally occurred to him, on very little reflection, that the first step to take would be to communicate with one of the Mr. Garlands instantly. It was very possible that Mr. Abel had not yet left the office. In as little time as it takes to tell it, the small servant had the address in pencil on a piece of paper; a verbal description of father and son, which would enable her to recognise either without difficulty; and a special caution to be shy of Mr. Chuckster, in consequence of that gentleman's known antipathy to Kit. Armed with these slender powers, she hurried away, commissioned to bring either old Mr. Garland or Mr. Abel, bodily, to that apartment.

"I suppose," said Dick as she closed the door slowly, and peeped into the room again, to make sure that he was comfortable, "I suppose there's nothing left—not so much as a waistcoat even?"

"No, nothing."

"It's embarrassing," said Mr. Swiveller, "in case of fire—even an umbrella would be something—but you did quite right, dear Marchioness. I should have died without you!"

## CHAPTER LXV.

**I**T was well for the small servant that she was of a sharp, quick nature, or the consequence of sending her out alone, from the very neighbourhood in which it was most dangerous for her to appear, would probably have been the restoration of Miss Sally Brass to the supreme authority over her person. Not unmindful of the risk she ran, however, the Marchioness no sooner left the house than she dived into the first dark by-way that presented itself, and, without any present reference to the point to which her journey tended, made it her first business to put two good miles of brick and mortar between herself and Bevis Marks.

When she had accomplished this object, she began to shape her course for the notary's office, to which—shrewdly inquiring of apple-women and oyster-sellers at street corners, rather than in lighted shops or of well-dressed people, at the hazard of attracting notice—she easily procured a direction. As carrier pigeons, on being first let loose in a strange place, beat the air at random for a short time, before darting off towards the spot for which they are designed, so did the Marchioness flutter round and round until she believed herself in safety, and then bear swiftly down upon the port for which she was bound.

She had no bonnet—nothing on her head but a great cap which, in some old time, had been worn by Sally Brass, whose taste in head-dresses was, as we have seen, peculiar—and her speed was rather retarded than assisted by her shoes, which, being extremely large and slipshod, flew off every now and then, and were difficult to find again among the crowd of passengers. Indeed, the poor little creature experienced so much trouble and delay from having to grope for these articles of dress in mud and kennel, and suffered in these researches so much jostling, pushing, squeezing, and bandying from hand to hand, that by the time she reached the street in which the notary lived, she was fairly worn out and exhausted, and could not refrain from tears.

But to have got there at last was a great comfort, especially as there were lights still burning in the office window, and therefore some hope that she was not too late. So, the Marchioness dried her eyes with the backs of her hands, and, stealing softly up the steps, peeped in through the glass door.

Mr. Chuckster was standing behind the lid of his desk, making such preparations towards finishing off for the night as pulling down his

wristbands and pulling up his shirt collar, settling his neck more gracefully in his stock, and secretly arranging his whiskers by the aid of a little triangular bit of looking-glass. Before the ashes of the fire stood two gentlemen, one of whom she rightly judged to be the notary, and the other (who was buttoning his great-coat, and was evidently about to depart immediately) Mr. Abel Garland.

Having made these observations, the small spy took counsel with herself, and resolved to wait in the street until Mr. Abel came out, as there would be then no fear of having to speak before Mr. Chuckster, and less difficulty in delivering her message. With this purpose she slipped out again, and, crossing the road, sat down upon a door-step just opposite.

She had hardly taken this position, when there came dancing up the street, with his legs all wrong, and his head everywhere by turns, a pony. This pony had a little phaeton behind him, and a man in it; but, neither man nor phaeton seemed to embarrass him in the least, as he reared up on his hind-legs, or stopped, or went on, or stood still again, or backed, or went sideways, without the smallest reference to them,—just as the fancy seized him, and as if he were the freest animal in creation. When they came to the notary's door, the man called out in a very respectful manner, "Woa then,"—intimating that, if he might venture to express a wish, it would be that they stopped there. The pony made a moment's pause; but, as if it occurred to him that to stop when he was required might be to establish an inconvenient and dangerous precedent, he immediately started off again, rattled at a fast trot to the street corner, wheeled round, came back, and then stopped of his own accord.

"Oh! you're a precious creatur'!" said the man—who didn't venture, by-the-bye, to come out in his true colours until he was safe on the pavement. "I wish I had the rewarding of you,—I do."

"What has he been doing?" said Mr. Abel, tying a shawl round his neck as he came down the steps.

"He's enough to fret a man's heart out," replied the hostler. "He is the most vicious rascal—— Woa then, will you?"

"He'll never stand still if you call him names," said Mr. Abel, getting in, and taking the reins. "He's a very good fellow if you know how to manage him. This is the first time he has been out this long while, for he has lost his old driver, and wouldn't stir for anybody else till this morning. The lamps are right, are



they? That's well. Be here to take him to-morrow, if you please. Good night!"

And, after one or two strange plunges, quite of his own invention, the pony yielded to Mr. Abel's mildness, and trotted gently off.

All this time Mr. Chuckster had been standing at the door, and the small servant had been afraid to approach. She had nothing for it now, therefore, but to run after the chaise, and to call to Mr. Abel to stop. Being out of breath when she came up with it, she was unable to make him hear. The case was desperate; for the pony was quickening his pace. The Marchioness hung on behind for a few moments, and, feeling that she could go no farther, and must soon yield, clambered by a vigorous effort into the hinder seat, and in so doing lost one of the shoes for ever.

Mr. Abel being in a thoughtful frame of mind, and having quite enough to do to keep the pony going, went jogging on without looking round: little dreaming of the strange figure that was close behind him, until the Marchioness, having in some degree recovered her breath, and the loss of her shoe, and the novelty of her position, uttered close into his ear the words:

"I say, sir——"

He turned his head quickly enough then, and, stopping the pony, cried, with some trepidation, "God bless me, what is this?"

"Don't be frightened, sir," replied the still panting messenger. "Oh, I've run such a way after you!"

"What do you want with me?" said Mr. Abel. "How did you come here?"

"I got in behind," replied the Marchioness. "Oh, please drive on, sir—don't stop—and go towards the City, will you? And oh, do please make haste, because it's of consequence! There's somebody wants to see you there. He sent me to say would you come directly, and that he knewed all about Kit, and could save him yet, and prove his innocence."

"What do you tell me, child?"

"The truth, upon my word and honour I do. But please to drive on—quick, please! I've been such a time gone, he'll think I'm lost."

Mr. Abel involuntarily urged the pony forward. The pony, impelled by some secret sympathy or some new caprice, burst into a great pace, and neither slackened it, nor indulged in any eccentric performances, until they arrived at the door of Mr. Swiveller's lodging, where, marvellous to relate, he consented to stop when Mr. Abel checked him.

"See! It's that room up there," said the

Marchioness, pointing to one where there was a faint light. "Come!"

Mr. Abel, who was one of the simplest and most retiring creatures in existence, and naturally timid withal, hesitated; for he had heard of people being decoyed into strange places to be robbed and murdered, under circumstances very like the present, and, for anything he knew to the contrary, by guides very like the Marchioness. His regard for Kit, however, overcame every other consideration. So, intrusting Whisker to the charge of a man who was lingering hard by in expectation of the job, he suffered his companion to take his hand, and to lead him up the dark and narrow stairs.

He was not a little surprised to find himself conducted into a dimly-lighted sick chamber, where a man was sleeping tranquilly in bed.

"An't it nice to see him lying there so quiet?" said his guide in an earnest whisper. "Oh! you'd say it was, if you had only seen him two or three days ago."

Mr. Abel made no answer, and, to say the truth, kept a long way from the bed, and very near the door. His guide, who appeared to understand his reluctance, trimmed the candle, and, taking it in her hand, approached the bed. As she did so, the sleeper started up, and he recognised in the wasted face the features of Richard Swiveller.

"Why, how is this?" said Mr. Abel kindly, as he hurried towards him. "You have been ill?"

"Very," replied Dick. "Nearly dead. You might have chanced to hear of your Richard on his bier, but for the friend I sent to fetch you. Another shake of the hand, Marchioness, if you please. Sit down, sir."

Mr. Abel seemed rather astonished to hear of the quality of his guide, and took a chair by the bedside.

"I have sent for you, sir," said Dick—"but she told you on what account?"

"She did. I am quite bewildered by all this. I really don't know what to say or think," replied Mr. Abel.

"You'll say that presently," retorted Dick. "Marchioness, take a seat on the bed, will you? Now, tell this gentleman all that you told me; and be particular. Don't you speak another word, sir."

The story was repeated; it was, in effect, exactly the same as before, without any deviation or omission. Richard Swiveller kept his eyes fixed on his visitor during its narration, and, directly it was concluded, took the word again.

"You have heard it all, and you'll not forget it. I'm too giddy and too queer to suggest anything; but you and your friends will know what to do. After this long delay, every minute is an age. If ever you went home fast in your life, go home fast to-night. Don't stop to say one word to me, but go. She will be found here, whenever she's wanted; and as to me, you're pretty sure to find me at home for a week or two. There are more reasons than

one for that. Marchioness, a light! If you lose another minute in looking at me, sir, I'll never forgive you!"

Mr. Abel needed no more remonstrance or persuasion. He was gone in an instant; and the Marchioness, returning from lighting him down-stairs, reported that the pony, without any preliminary objection whatever, had dashed away at full gallop.

"That's right!" said Dick; "and hearty of



"SHE HAD NOTHING FOR IT NOW, THEREFORE, BUT TO RUN AFTER THE CHAISE."

him; and I honour him from this time. But get some supper and a mug of beer, for I am sure you must be tired. Do have a mug of beer. It will do me as much good to see you take it as if I might drink it myself."

Nothing but this assurance could have prevailed upon the small nurse to indulge in such a luxury. Having eaten and drunk to Mr. Swiveller's extreme contentment, given him his drink, and put everything in neat order, she

wrapped herself in an old coverlet, and lay down upon the rug before the fire.

Mr. Swiveller was by that time murmuring in his sleep, "Strew then, oh strew, a bed of rushes. Here will we stay till morning blushes. Good night, Marchioness!"



## CHAPTER LXVI.

**O**N awaking in the morning, Richard Swiveller became conscious, by slow degrees, of whispering voices in his room. Looking out between the curtains, he espied Mr. Garland, Mr. Abel, the notary, and the single gentleman gathered round the Marchioness, and talking to her with great earnestness, but in very subdued tones—fearing, no doubt, to disturb him. He lost no time in letting them know that this precaution was unnecessary, and all four gentlemen directly approached his bedside. Old Mr. Garland was the first to stretch out his hand and inquire how he felt.

Dick was about to answer that he felt much better, though still as weak as need be, when his little nurse, pushing the visitors aside and pressing up to his pillow as if in jealousy of their interference, set his breakfast before him, and insisted on his taking it before he underwent the fatigue of speaking or of being spoken to. Mr. Swiveller, who was perfectly ravenous, and had had, all night, amazingly distinct and consistent dreams of mutton chops, double stout, and similar delicacies, felt even the weak tea and dry toast such irresistible temptations, that he consented to eat and drink on one condition.

“And that is,” said Dick, returning the pressure of Mr. Garland’s hand, “that you answer me this question truly, before I take a bit or drop. Is it too late?”

“For completing the work you began so well last night?” returned the old gentleman. “No—Set your mind at rest on that point. It is not, I assure you.”

Comforted by this intelligence, the patient applied himself to his food with a keen appetite, though evidently not with a greater zest in the eating than his nurse appeared to have in seeing him eat. The manner of his meal was this:—Mr. Swiveller, holding the slice of toast or cup of tea in his left hand, and taking a bite or drink, as the case might be, constantly kept, in his right, one palm of the Marchioness tight locked; and to shake or even to kiss this imprisoned hand, he would stop every now and then, in the very act of swallowing, with perfect seriousness of intention, and the utmost gravity. As often as he put anything into his mouth, whether for eating or drinking, the face of the Marchioness lighted up beyond all description; but, whenever he gave her one or other of these tokens of recognition, her countenance became

overshadowed, and she began to sob. Now, whether she was in her laughing joy, or in her crying one, the Marchioness could not help turning to the visitors with an appealing look, which seemed to say, “You see this fellow—can I help this?”—and they, being thus made, as it were, parties to the scene, as regularly answered by another look, “No. Certainly not.” This dumb-show, taking place during the whole time of the invalid’s breakfast, and the invalid himself, pale and emaciated, performing no small part in the same, it may be fairly questioned whether at any meal, where no word, good or bad, was spoken from beginning to end, so much was expressed by gestures in themselves so slight and unimportant.

At length—and, to say the truth, before very long—Mr. Swiveller had dispatched as much toast and tea as in that stage of his recovery it was discreet to let him have. But the cares of the Marchioness did not stop here; for, disappearing for an instant, and presently returning with a basin of fair water, she laved his face and hands, brushed his hair, and, in short, made him as spruce and smart as anybody under such circumstances could be made; and all this in as brisk and business-like a manner as if he were a very little boy, and she his grown-up nurse. To these various attentions Mr. Swiveller submitted in a kind of grateful astonishment beyond the reach of language. When they were at last brought to an end, and the Marchioness had withdrawn into a distant corner to take her own poor breakfast (cold enough by that time), he turned his face away for some few moments, and shook hands heartily with the air.

“Gentlemen,” said Dick, rousing himself from this pause, and turning round again, “you’ll excuse me. Men who have been brought so low as I have been are easily fatigued. I am fresh again now, and fit for talking. We’re short of chairs here, among other trifles, but if you’ll do me the favour to sit upon the bed—”

“What can we do for you?” said Mr. Garland kindly.

“If you could make the Marchioness yonder a Marchioness in real, sober earnest,” returned Dick, “I’d thank you to get it done off-hand. But as you can’t, and as the question is not what you will do for me, but what you will do for somebody else, who has a better claim upon you, pray, sir, let me know what you intend doing.”

“It’s chiefly on that account that we have come just now,” said the single gentleman, “for you will have another visitor presently. We feared you would be anxious unless you knew

from ourselves what steps we intended to take, and therefore came to you before we stirred in the matter."

"Gentlemen," returned Dick, "I thank you. Anybody in the helpless state that you see me in is naturally anxious. Don't let me interrupt you, sir."

"Then, you see, my good fellow," said the single gentleman, "that while we have no doubt whatever of the truth of this disclosure, which has so providentially come to light——"

"—Meaning hers?" said Dick, pointing towards the Marchioness.

"Meaning hers, of course. While we have no doubt of that, or that a proper use of it would procure the poor lad's immediate pardon and liberation, we have a great doubt whether it would, by itself, enable us to reach Quilp, the chief agent in this villainy. I should tell you that this doubt has been confirmed into something very nearly approaching certainty by the best opinions we have been enabled, in this short space of time, to take upon the subject. You'll agree with us, that to give him even the most distant chance of escape, if we could help it, would be monstrous. You say with us, no doubt, if somebody must escape, let it be any one but he."

"Yes," returned Dick, "certainly. That is, if somebody *must*—but, upon my word, I'm unwilling that anybody should. Since laws were made for every degree, to curb vice in others as well as in me—and so forth you know—doesn't it strike you in that light?"

The single gentleman smiled as if the light in which Mr. Swiveller had put the question were not the clearest in the world, and proceeded to explain that they contemplated proceeding by stratagem in the first instance; and that their design was to endeavour to extort a confession from the gentle Sarah.

"When she finds how much we know, and how we know it," he said, "and that she is clearly compromised already, we are not without strong hopes that we may be enabled, through her means, to punish the other two effectually. If we could do that, she might go scot-free for aught I cared."

Dick received this project in anything but a gracious manner, representing, with as much warmth as he was then capable of showing, that they would find the old buck (meaning Sarah) more difficult to manage than Quilp himself—that, for any tampering, terrifying, or cajolery, she was a very unpromising and unyielding subject—that she was of a kind of brass not easily melted or moulded into shape—in short, that

they were no match for her, and would be signally defeated. But, it was in vain to urge them to adopt some other course. The single gentleman has been described as explaining their joint intentions, but it should have been written that they all spoke together; that if any one of them by chance held his peace for a moment, he stood gasping and panting for an opportunity to strike in again; in a word, that they had reached that pitch of impatience and anxiety where men can neither be persuaded nor reasoned with; and that it would have been as easy to turn the most impetuous wind that ever blew, as to prevail on them to reconsider their determination. So, after telling Mr. Swiveller how they had not lost sight of Kit's mother and the children; how they had never once even lost sight of Kit himself, but had been unremitting in their endeavours to procure a mitigation of his sentence; how they had been perfectly distracted between the strong proofs of his guilt, and their own fading hopes of his innocence; and how he, Richard Swiveller, might keep his mind at rest, for everything should be happily adjusted between that time and night;—after telling him all this, and adding a great many kind and cordial expressions, personal to himself, which it is unnecessary to recite, Mr. Garland, the notary, and the single gentleman took their leaves at a very critical time, or Richard Swiveller must assuredly have been driven into another fever, whereof the results might have been fatal.

Mr. Abel remained behind, very often looking at his watch and at the room-door, until Mr. Swiveller was roused from a short nap by the setting down on the landing-place outside, as from the shoulders of a porter, of some giant load, which seemed to shake the house, and make the little physic bottles on the mantel-shelf ring again. Directly this sound reached his ears, Mr. Abel started up, and hobbled to the door, and opened it; and behold! there stood a strong man, with a mighty hamper, which, being hauled into the room and presently unpacked, disgorged such treasures of tea, and coffee, and wine, and rusks, and oranges, and grapes, and fowls ready trussed for boiling, and calves'-foot jelly, and arrow-root, and sago, and other delicate restoratives, that the small servant, who had never thought it possible that such things could be, except in shops, stood rooted to the spot in her one shoe, with her mouth and eyes watering in unison, and her power of speech quite gone. But, not so Mr. Abel; or the strong man who emptied the hamper, big as it was, in a twinkling; and not so the nice old lady, who appeared so suddenly



that she might have come out of the hamper too (it was quite large enough), and who, bustling about on tiptoe and without noise—now here, now there, now everywhere at once—began to fill out the jelly in teacups, and to make chicken broth in small saucepans, and to peel oranges for the sick man, and to cut them up in little pieces, and to ply the small servant with glasses of wine and choice bits of everything until more substantial meat could be prepared for her refreshment. The whole of which appearances were so unexpected and bewildering, that Mr. Swiveller, when he had taken two oranges and a little jelly, and had seen the strong man walk off with the empty basket, plainly leaving all that abundance for his use and benefit, was fain to lie down and fall to sleep again, from sheer inability to entertain such wonders in his mind.

Meanwhile, the single gentleman, the notary, and Mr. Garland repaired to a certain coffee-house, and from that place indited and sent a letter to Miss Sally Brass, requesting her, in terms mysterious and brief, to favour an unknown friend, who wished to consult her, with her company there as speedily as possible. The communication performed its errand so well, that within ten minutes of the messenger's return and report of its delivery, Miss Brass herself was announced.

"Pray, ma'am," said the single gentleman, whom she found alone in the room, "take a chair."

Miss Brass sat herself down in a very stiff and frigid state, and seemed—as indeed she was—not a little astonished to find that the lodger and her mysterious correspondent were one and the same person.

"You did not expect to see me," said the single gentleman.

"I didn't think much about it," returned the beauty. "I supposed it was business of some kind or other. If it's about the apartments, of course you'll give my brother regular notice, you know—or money. That's very easily settled. You're a responsible party, and in such a case lawful money and lawful notice are pretty much the same."

"I am obliged to you for your good opinion," retorted the single gentleman, "and quite concur in those sentiments. But, that is not the subject on which I wish to speak with you."

"Oh!" said Sally. "Then just state the particulars, will you? I suppose it's professional business?"

"Why, it is connected with the law, certainly."

"Very well," returned Miss Brass. "My

brother and I are just the same. I can take any instructions, or give you any advice."

"As there are other parties interested besides myself," said the single gentleman, rising and opening the door of an inner room, "we had better confer together. Miss Brass is here, gentlemen!"

Mr. Garland and the notary walked in, looking very grave: and, drawing up two chairs, one on each side of the single gentleman, formed a kind of fence round the gentle Sarah, and penned her into a corner. Her brother Sampson, under such circumstances, would certainly have evinced some confusion or anxiety, but she—all composure—pulled out the tin box, and calmly took a pinch of snuff.

"Miss Brass," said the notary, taking the word at this crisis, "we professional people understand each other, and, when we choose, can say what we have to say in very few words. You advertised a runaway servant the other day?"

"Well," returned Miss Sally with a sudden flush overspreading her features, "what of that?"

"She is found, ma'am," said the notary, pulling out his pocket-handkerchief with a flourish. "She is found."

"Who found her?" demanded Sarah hastily.

"We did, ma'am—we three. Only last night, or you would have heard from us before."

"And now I *have* heard from you," said Miss Brass, folding her arms as though she were about to deny something to the death, "what have you got to say? Something you have got into your heads about her, of course. Prove it, will you?—that's all. Prove it. You have found her, you say. I can tell you (if you don't know it) that you have found the most artful, lying, pilfering, devilish little minx that was ever born.—Have you got her here?" she added, looking sharply round.

"No, she is not here at present," returned the notary. "But she is quite safe."

"Ha!" cried Sally, twitching a pinch of snuff out of her box, as spitefully as if she were in the very act of wrenching off the small servant's nose; "she shall be safe enough from this time, I warrant you."

"I hope so," replied the notary.—"Did it occur to you for the first time, when you found she had run away, that there were two keys to your kitchen door?"

Miss Sally took another pinch, and, putting her head on one side, looked at her questioner, with a curious kind of spasm about her mouth, but with a cunning aspect of immense expression.

"Two keys," repeated the notary; "one of which gave her the opportunities of roaming through the house at nights when you supposed her fast locked up, and of overhearing confidential consultations—among others, that particular conference, to be described to-day before a justice, which you will have an opportunity of hearing her relate; that conference which you and Mr. Brass held together, on the night before that most unfortunate and innocent young man was accused of robbery, by a horrible device of which I will only say that it may be characterised by the epithets you have applied to this wretched little witness, and by a few stronger ones besides."

Sally took another pinch. Although her face was wonderfully composed, it was apparent that she was wholly taken by surprise, and that what she had expected to be taxed with, in connection with her small servant, was something very different from this.

"Come, come, Miss Brass," said the notary, "you have great command of feature, but you feel, I see, that by a chance which never entered your imagination, this base design is revealed, and two of its plotters must be brought to justice. Now, you know the pains and penalties you are liable to, and so I need not dilate upon them, but I have a proposal to make to you. You have the honour of being sister to one of the greatest scoundrels unhung; and, if I may venture to say so to a lady, you are in every respect quite worthy of him. But, connected with you two is a third party, a villain of the name of Quilp, the prime mover of the whole diabolical device, who I believe to be worse than either. For his sake, Miss Brass, do us the favour to reveal the whole history of this affair. Let me remind you that your doing so, at our instance, will place you in a safe and comfortable position—your present one is not desirable—and cannot injure your brother; for against him and you we have quite sufficient evidence (as you hear) already. I will not say to you that we suggest this course in mercy (for, to tell you the truth, we do not entertain any regard for you), but it is a necessity to which we are reduced, and I recommend it to you as a matter of the very best policy. 'Time,' said Mr. Witherden, pulling out his watch, "in a business like this, is exceedingly precious. Favour us with your decision as speedily as possible, ma'am."

With a smile upon her face, and looking at each of the three by turns, Miss Brass took two or three more pinches of snuff, and having by this time very little left, travelled round and

round the box with her forefinger and thumb, scraping up another. Having disposed of this likewise, and put the box carefully in her pocket, she said:

"I am to accept or reject at once, am I?"

"Yes," said Mr. Witherden.

The charming creature was opening her lips to speak in reply, when the door was hastily opened too, and the head of Sampson Brass was thrust into the room.

"Excuse me," said that gentleman hastily. "Wait a bit!"

So saying, and quite indifferent to the astonishment his presence occasioned, he crept in, shut the door, kissed his greasy glove as servilely as if it were the dust, and made a most abject bow.

"Sarah," said Brass, "hold your tongue, if you please, and let me speak. Gentlemen, if I could express the pleasure it gives me to see three such men in a happy unity of feeling and concord of sentiment, I think you would hardly believe me. But though I am unfortunate—nay, gentlemen, criminal, if we are to use harsh expressions in a company like this—still, I have my feelings like other men. I have heard of a poet who remarked that feelings were the common lot of all. If he could have been a pig, gentlemen, and have uttered that sentiment, he would still have been immortal."

"If you're not an idiot," said Miss Brass harshly, "hold your peace."

"Sarah, my dear," returned her brother, "thank you. But I know what I am about, my love, and will take the liberty of expressing myself accordingly. Mr. Witherden, sir, your handkerchief is hanging out of your pocket—would you allow me to—"

As Mr. Brass advanced to remedy this accident, the notary shrunk from him with an air of disgust. Brass, who, over and above his usual prepossessing qualities, had a scratched face, a green shade over one eye, and a hat grievously crushed, stopped short, and looked round with a pitiful smile.

"He shuns me," said Sampson, "even when I would, as I may say, heap coals of fire upon his head. Well! Ah! But I am a falling house, and the rats (if I may be allowed the expression in reference to a gentleman I respect and love beyond everything) fly from me! Gentlemen—regarding your conversation just now, I happened to see my sister on her way here, and, wondering where she could be going to, and being—may I venture to say?—naturally of a suspicious turn, followed her. Since then I have been listening."



"If you're not mad," interposed Miss Sally, "stop there, and say no more."

"Sarah, my dear," rejoined Brass with undiminished politeness, "I thank you kindly, but will still proceed. Mr. Witherden, sir, as we have the honour to be members of the same profession—to say nothing of that other gentleman having been my lodger, and having partaken, as one may say, of the hospitality of my roof—I think you might have given me the refusal of this offer in the first instance. I do indeed. Now, my dear sir," cried Brass, seeing that the notary was about to interrupt him, "suffer me to speak, I beg."

Mr. Witherden was silent, and Brass went on.

"If you will do me the favour," he said, holding up the green shade, and revealing an eye most horribly discoloured, "to look at this, you will naturally inquire, in your own minds, how did I get it? If you look from that to my face, you will wonder what could have been the cause of all these scratches. And if from them to my hat, how it came into the state in which you see it. Gentlemen," said Brass, striking the hat fiercely with his clenched hand, "to all these questions I answer—Quilp!"

The three gentlemen looked at each other, but said nothing.

"I say," pursued Brass, glancing aside at his sister, as though he were talking for her information, and speaking with a snarling malignity, in violent contrast to his usual smoothness, "that I answer to all these questions,—Quilp—Quilp, who deludes me into his infernal den, and takes a delight in looking on and chuckling while I scorch, and burn, and bruise, and maim myself—Quilp, who never once, no, never once, in all our communications together, has treated me otherwise than as a dog—Quilp, whom I have always hated with my whole heart, but never so much as lately. He gives me the cold shoulder on this very matter, as if he had had nothing to do with it, instead of being the first to propose it. I can't trust him. In one of his howling, raving, blazing humours, I believe he'd let it out, if it was murder, and never think of himself so long as he could terrify me. Now," said Brass, picking up his hat again, replacing the shade over his eye, and actually crouching down in the excess of his servility, "what does all this lead me to?—what should you say it led me to, gentlemen?—could you guess at all near the mark?"

Nobody spoke. Brass stood smirking for a little while, as if he had propounded some choice conundrum; and then said:

"To be short with you, then, it leads me to this. If the truth has come out, as it plainly has in a manner that there's no standing up against—and a very sublime and grand thing is Truth, gentlemen, in its way, though, like other sublime and grand things, such as thunder-storms and that, we're not always over and above glad to see it—I had better turn upon this man than let this man turn upon me. It's clear to me that I am done for. Therefore, if anybody is to split, I had better be the person, and have the advantage of it. Sarah, my dear, comparatively speaking, you're safe. I relate these circumstances for my own profit."

With that, Mr. Brass, in a great hurry, revealed the whole story; bearing as heavily as possible on his amiable employer, and making himself out to be rather a saint-like and holy character, though subject—he acknowledged—to human weaknesses. He concluded thus:

"Now, gentlemen, I am not a man who does things by halves. Being in for a penny, I am ready, as the saying is, to be in for a pound. You must do with me what you please, and take me where you please. If you wish to have this in writing, we'll reduce it into manuscript immediately. You will be tender with me, I am sure. I am quite confident you will be tender with me. You are men of honour, and have feeling hearts. I yielded from necessity to Quilp, for though necessity has no law, she has her lawyers. I yield to you from necessity too; from policy besides; and because of feelings that have been a pretty long time working within me. Punish Quilp, gentlemen. Weigh heavily upon him. Grind him down. Tread him under foot. He has done as much by me, for many and many a day."

Having now arrived at the conclusion of his discourse, Sampson checked the current of his wrath, kissed his glove again, and smiled as only parasites and cowards can.

"And this," said Miss Brass, raising her head, with which she had hitherto sat resting on her hands, and surveying him from head to foot with a bitter sneer, "this is my brother, is it? This is my brother, that I have worked and toiled for, and believed to have had something of the man in him!"

"Sarah, my dear," returned Sampson, rubbing his hands feebly; "you disturb our friends. Besides, you—you're disappointed, Sarah, and, not knowing what you say, expose yourself."

"Yes, you pitiful dastard," retorted the lovely damsel, "I understand you. You feared that I should be beforehand with you. But do you think that I would have been enticed to say a

word? I'd have scorned it, if they had tried and tempted me for twenty years."

"He, he!" simpered Brass, who, in his deep debasement, really seemed to have changed sexes with his sister, and to have made over to her any spark of manliness he might have possessed. "You think so, Sarah, you think so, perhaps; but you would have acted quite different, my good fellow. You will not have forgotten that it was a maxim with Foxey—our revered father, gentlemen—'Always suspect everybody.' That's the maxim to go through life with! If you were not actually about to purchase your own safety when I showed myself, I suspect you'd have done it by this time. And therefore I've done it myself, and spared you the trouble as well as the shame. The shame, gentlemen," added Brass, allowing himself to be slightly overcome, "if there is any, is mine. It's better that a female should be spared it."

With deference to the better opinion of Mr. Brass, and more particularly to the authority of his Great Ancestor, it may be doubted, with humility, whether the elevating principle laid down by the latter gentleman, and acted upon by his descendant, is always a prudent one, or attended in practice with the desired results. This is, beyond question, a bold and presumptuous doubt, inasmuch as many distinguished characters, called men of the world, long-headed customers, knowing dogs, shrewd fellows, capital hands at business, and the like, have made, and do daily make, this axiom their polar star and compass. Still, the doubt may be gently insinuated. And in illustration it may be observed that if Mr. Brass, not being over-suspicious, had, without prying and listening, left his sister to manage the conference on their joint behalf, or, prying and listening, had not been in such a mighty hurry to anticipate her (which he would not have been, but for his distrust and jealousy), he would probably have found himself much better off in the end. Thus, it will always happen that these men of the world, who go through it in armour, defend themselves from quite as much good as evil; to say nothing of the inconvenience and absurdity of mounting guard with a microscope at all times, and of wearing a coat of mail on the most innocent occasions.

The three gentlemen spoke together apart for a few moments. At the end of their consultation, which was very brief, the notary pointed to the writing materials on the table, and informed Mr. Brass that, if he wished to make any statement in writing, he had the oppor-

tunity of doing so. At the same time he felt bound to tell him that they would require his attendance, presently, before a justice of the peace, and that, in what he did or said, he was guided entirely by his own discretion.

"Gentlemen," said Brass, drawing off his gloves, and crawling in spirit upon the ground before them, "I will justify the tenderness with which I know I shall be treated; and as, without tenderness, I should, now that this discovery has been made, stand in the worst position of the three, you may depend upon it I will make a clean breast. Mr. Witherden, sir, a kind of faintness is upon my spirits—if you would do me the favour to ring the bell and order up a glass of something warm and spicy, I shall, notwithstanding what has passed, have a melancholy pleasure in drinking your good health. I had hoped," said Brass, looking round with a mournful smile, "to have seen you three gentlemen, one day or another, with your legs under the mahogany in my humble parlour in the Marks. But hopes are fleeting. Dear me!"

Mr. Brass found himself so exceedingly affected at this point, that he could say or do nothing more until some refreshment arrived. Having partaken of it, pretty freely for one in his agitated state, he sat down to write.

The lovely Sarah, now with her arms folded, and now with her hands clasped behind her, paced the room with many strides while her brother was thus employed, and sometimes stopped to pull out her snuff-box and bite the lid. She continued to pace up and down until she was quite tired, and then fell asleep on a chair near the door.

It has been since supposed, with some reason, that this slumber was a sham or feint, as she contrived to slip away unobserved in the dusk of the afternoon. Whether this was an intentional and waking departure, or a somnambulistic leave-taking and walking in her sleep, may remain a subject of contention; but, on one point (and indeed the main one), all parties are agreed. In whatever state she walked away, she certainly did not walk back again.

Mention having been made of the dusk of the afternoon, it will be inferred that Mr. Brass's task occupied some time in the completion. It was not finished until evening; but, being done at last, that worthy person and the three friends adjourned in a hackney coach to the private office of a justice, who, giving Mr. Brass a warm reception, and detaining him in a secure place that he might insure to himself the pleasure of seeing him on the morrow, dismissed



the others with the cheering assurance that a warrant could not fail to be granted next day for the apprehension of Mr. Quilp, and that a proper application and statement of all the circumstances to the secretary of state (who was fortunately in town) would no doubt procure Kit's free pardon and liberation without delay.

And now, indeed, it seemed that Quilp's malignant career was drawing to a close, and that retribution, which often travels slowly—especially when heaviest—had tracked his footsteps with a sure and certain scent, and was gaining on him fast. Unmindful of her stealthy tread, her victim holds his course in fancied triumph. Still at his heels she comes, and, once afoot, is never turned aside!

Their business ended, the three gentlemen hastened back to the lodgings of Mr. Swiveller, whom they found progressing so favourably in his recovery as to have been able to sit up for half an hour, and to have conversed with cheerfulness. Mrs. Garland had gone home some time since, but Mr. Abel was still sitting with him. After telling him all they had done, the two Mr. Garlands and the single gentleman, as if by some previous understanding, took their leaves for the night, leaving the invalid alone with the notary and the small servant.

"As you are so much better," said Mr. Witherden, sitting down at the bedside, "I may venture to communicate to you a piece of news which has come to me professionally."

The idea of any professional intelligence from a gentleman connected with legal matters appeared to afford Richard anything but a pleasing anticipation. Perhaps he connected it in his own mind with one or two outstanding accounts, in reference to which he had already received divers threatening letters. His countenance fell as he replied:

"Certainly, sir. I hope it's not anything of a very disagreeable nature, though?"

"If I thought it so, I should choose some better time for communicating it," replied the notary. "Let me tell you, first, that my friends who have been here to-day know nothing of it, and that their kindness to you has been quite spontaneous, and with no hope of return. It may do a thoughtless, careless man good to know that."

Dick thanked him, and said he hoped it would.

"I have been making some inquiries about you," said Mr. Witherden, "little thinking that I should find you under such circumstances as those which have brought us together. You

are the nephew of Rebecca Swiveller, spinster, deceased, of Cheselbourne in Dorsetshire."

"Deceased!" cried Dick.

"Deceased. If you had been another sort of nephew, you would have come into possession (so says the will, and I see no reason to doubt it) of five-and-twenty thousand pounds. As it is, you have fallen into an annuity of one hundred and fifty pounds a year; but I think I may congratulate you even upon that."

"Sir," said Dick, sobbing and laughing together, "you may. For, please God, we'll make a scholar of the poor Marchioness yet! And she shall walk in silk attire, and siller have to spare, or may I never rise from this bed again!"

## CHAPTER LXVII.

**U** NCONSCIOUS of the proceedings faithfully narrated in the last chapter, and little dreaming of the mine which had been sprung beneath him (for, to the end that he should have no warning of the business afoot, the profoundest secrecy was observed in the whole transaction), Mr. Quilp remained shut up in his hermitage, undisturbed by any suspicion, and extremely well satisfied with the result of his machinations. Being engaged in the adjustment of some accounts—an occupation to which the silence and solitude of his retreat were very favourable—he had not strayed from his den for two whole days. The third day of his devotion to this pursuit found him still hard at work, and little disposed to stir abroad.

It was the day next after Mr. Brass's confession, and, consequently, that which threatened the restriction of Mr. Quilp's liberty, and the abrupt communication to him of some very unpleasant and unwelcome facts. Having no intuitive perception of the cloud which lowered upon his house, the dwarf was in his ordinary state of cheerfulness; and, when he found he was becoming too much engrossed by business with a due regard to his health and spirits, he varied its monotonous routine with a little screeching, or howling, or some other innocent relaxation of that nature.

He was attended, as usual, by Tom Scott, who sat crouching over the fire after the manner of a toad, and, from time to time, when his master's back was turned, imitated his grimaces with a fearful exactness. The figure-head had not yet disappeared, but remained in its old

place. The face, horribly seared by the frequent application of the red-hot poker, and further ornamented by the insertion, in the tip of the nose, of a tenpenny nail, yet smiled blandly in its less-lacerated parts, and seemed, like a sturdy martyr, to provoke its tormentor to the commission of new outrages and insults.

The day, in the highest and brightest quarters of the town, was damp, dark, cold, and gloomy. In that low and marshy spot the fog filled every nook and corner with a thick dense cloud. Every object was obscured at one or two yards' distance. The warning lights and fires upon the river were powerless beneath this pall, and but for a raw and piercing chillness in the air, and now and then the cry of some bewildered boatman as he rested on his oars and tried to make out where he was, the river itself might have been miles away.

The mist, though sluggish and slow to move, was of a keenly searching kind. No muffling up in furs and broadcloth kept it out. It seemed to penetrate into the very bones of the shrinking wayfarers, and to rack them with cold and pains. Everything was wet and clammy to the touch. The warm blaze alone defied it, and leaped and sparkled merrily. It was a day to be at home, crowding about the fire, telling stories of travellers who had lost their way in such weather on heaths and moors; and to love a warm hearth more than ever.

The dwarf's humour, as we know, was to have a fireside to himself; and, when he was disposed to be convivial, to enjoy himself alone. By no means insensible to the comfort of being within doors, he ordered Tom Scott to pile the little stove with coals, and, dismissing his work for that day, determined to be jovial.

To this end, he lighted up fresh candles and heaped more fuel on the fire; and having dined off a beef-steak, which he cooked himself in somewhat of a savage and cannibal-like manner, brewed a great bowl of hot punch, lighted his pipe, and sat down to spend the evening.

At this moment a low knocking at the cabin door arrested his attention. When it had been twice or thrice repeated, he softly opened the little window, and thrusting his head out, demanded who was there.

"Only me, Quilp," replied a woman's voice.

"Only you!" cried the dwarf, stretching his neck to obtain a better view of his visitor. "And what brings you here, you jade? How dare you approach the ogre's castle, eh?"

"I have come with some news," rejoined his spouse. "Don't be angry with me."

"Is it good news, pleasant news, news to

make a man skip and snap his fingers?" said the dwarf. "Is the dear old lady dead?"

"I don't know what news it is, or whether it's good or bad," rejoined his wife.

"Then she's alive," said Quilp, "and there's nothing the matter with her. Go home again, you bird of evil note, go home!"

"I have brought a letter——" cried the meek little woman.

"Toss it in at the window here, and go your ways," said Quilp, interrupting her, "or I'll come out and scratch you."

"No, but please, Quilp—do hear me speak." urged his submissive wife in tears. "Please do!"

"Speak, then," growled the dwarf with a malicious grin. "Be quick and short about it. Speak, will you?"

"It was left at our house this afternoon," said Mrs. Quilp, trembling, "by a boy who said he didn't know from whom it came, but that it was given to him to leave, and that he was told to say it must be brought on to you directly, for it was of the very greatest consequence.—But please," she added, as her husband stretched out his hand for it, "please let me in. You don't know how wet and cold I am, or how many times I have lost my way in coming here through this thick fog. Let me dry myself at the fire for five minutes. I'll go away directly you tell me to, Quilp. Upon my word I will."

Her amiable husband hesitated for a few moments; but, bethinking himself that the letter might require some answer, of which she could be the bearer, closed the window, opened the door, and bade her enter. Mrs. Quilp obeyed right willingly, and, kneeling down before the fire to warm her hands, delivered into his a little packet.

"I'm glad you're wet," said Quilp, snatching it, and squinting at her. "I'm glad you're cold. I'm glad you've lost your way. I'm glad your eyes are red with crying. It does my heart good to see your little nose so pinched and frosty."

"Oh, Quilp!" sobbed his wife. "How cruel it is of you!"

"Did she think I was dead?" said Quilp, wrinkling his face into a most extraordinary series of grimaces. "Did she think she was going to have all the money, and to marry somebody she liked? Ha, ha, ha! Did she?"

These taunts elicited no reply from the poor little woman, who remained on her knees, warming her hands, and sobbing, to Mr. Quilp's great delight. But, just as he was contemplating her, and chuckling excessively, he happened to observe that Tom Scott was delighted too; where-



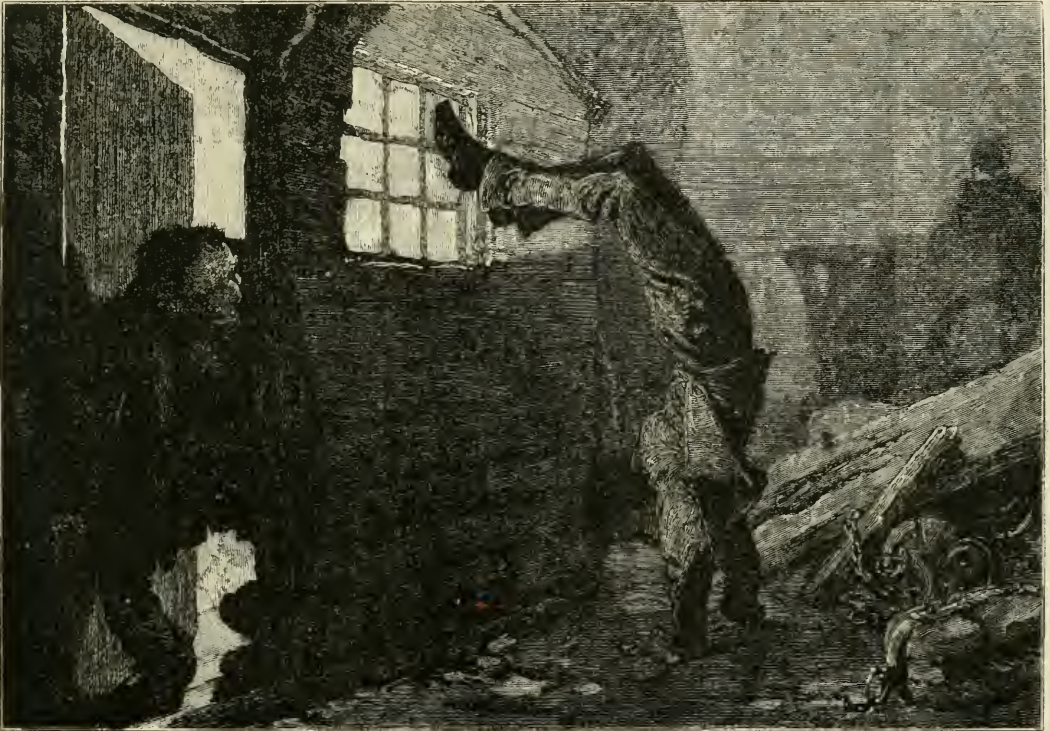
fore, that he might have no presumptuous partner in his glee, the dwarf instantly collared him, dragged him to the door, and, after a short scuffle, kicked him into the yard. In return for this mark of attention, Tom immediately walked upon his hands to the window, and—if the expression be allowable—looked in with his shoes: besides rattling his feet upon the glass like a Banshee upside down. As a matter of course, Mr. Quilp lost no time in resorting to the infallible poker, with which, after some dodging and lying in ambush, he paid his young friend

one or two such unequivocal compliments that he vanished precipitately, and left him in quiet possession of the field.

“So! That little job being disposed of,” said the dwarf coolly, “I’ll read my letter. Humph!” he muttered, looking at the direction. “I ought to know this writing. Beautiful Sally!”

Opening it, he read, in a fair, round, legal hand, as follows:

“Sammy has been practised upon, and has broken confidence. It has all come out. You had better not be in the way, for strangers are



“TOM IMMEDIATELY WALKED UPON HIS HANDS TO THE WINDOW, AND—IF THE EXPRESSION BE ALLOWABLE—LOOKED IN WITH HIS SHOES.”

going to call upon you. They have been very quiet as yet, because they mean to surprise you. Don’t lose time. I didn’t. I am not to be found anywhere. If I was you, I wouldn’t be, either. S. B., late of B. M.”

To describe the changes that passed over Quilp’s face, as he read this letter half-a-dozen times, would require some new language: such, for power of expression, as was never written, read, or spoken. For a long time he did not utter one word: but, after a considerable interval, during which Mrs. Quilp was almost

paralysed with the alarm his looks engendered, he contrived to gasp out:

“If I had him here! If I only had him here——”

“Oh, Quilp!” said his wife, “what’s the matter? Who are you angry with?”

“I should drown him,” said the dwarf, not heeding her. “Too easy a death, too short, too quick—but the river runs close at hand. Oh! If I had him here! Just to take him to the brink, coaxingly and pleasantly—holding him by the button-hole—joking with him—and, with

a sudden push, to send him splashing down! Drowning men come to the surface three times they say. Ah! To see him those three times, and mock him as his face came bobbing up,—oh, what a rich treat that would be!”

“Quilp!” stammered his wife, venturing at the same time to touch him on the shoulder: “what has gone wrong?”

She was so terrified by the relish with which he pictured this pleasure to himself, that she could scarcely make herself intelligible.

“Such a bloodless cur!” said Quilp, rubbing his hands very slowly, and pressing them tight together. “I thought his cowardice and servility were the best guarantee for his keeping silence. Oh, Brass, Brass—my dear, good, affectionate, faithful, complimentary, charming friend—if I only had you here!”

His wife, who had retreated lest she should seem to listen to these mutterings, ventured to approach him again, and was about to speak, when he hurried to the door and called Tom Scott, who, remembering his late gentle admonition, deemed it prudent to appear immediately.

“There!” said the dwarf, pulling him in. “Take her home. Don’t come here to-morrow, for this place will be shut up. Come back no more till you hear from me or see me. Do you mind?”

Tom nodded sulkily, and beckoned Mrs. Quilp to lead the way.

“As for you,” said the dwarf, addressing himself to her, “ask no questions about me, make no search for me, say nothing concerning me. I shall not be dead, mistress, and that’ll comfort you. He’ll take care of you.”

“But, Quilp! What is the matter? Where are you going? Do say something more.”

“I’ll say that,” said the dwarf, seizing her by the arm, “and do that too, which undone and unsaid would be best for you, unless you go directly.”

“Has anything happened?” cried his wife. “Oh! Do tell me that!”

“Yes,” snarled the dwarf. “No. What matter which? I have told you what to do. Woe betide you if you fail to do it, or disobey me by a hair’s breadth. Will you go?”

“I am going, I’ll go directly; but,” faltered his wife, “answer me one question first. Has this letter any connection with dear little Nell? I must ask you that—I must indeed, Quilp. You cannot think what days and nights of sorrow I have had through having once deceived that child. I don’t know what harm I may have brought about, but, great or little, I did it for you, Quilp. My conscience misgave me

when I did it. Do answer me this question, if you please.”

The exasperated dwarf returned no answer, but turned round and caught up his usual weapon with such vehemence, that Tom Scott dragged his charge away by main force, and as swiftly as he could. It was well he did so, for Quilp, who was nearly mad with rage, pursued them to the neighbouring lane, and might have prolonged the chase but for the dense mist which obscured them from his view, and appeared to thicken every moment.

“It will be a good night for travelling anonymously,” he said as he returned slowly: being pretty well breathed with his run. “Stay. We may look better here. This is too hospitable and free.”

By a great exertion of strength he closed the two old gates, which were deeply sunken in the mud, and barred them with a heavy beam. That done, he shook his matted hair from about his eyes, and tried them.—Strong and fast.

“The fence between this wharf and the next is easily climbed,” said the dwarf when he had taken these precautions. “There’s a back-lane, too, from there. That shall be my way out. A man need know his road well to find it in this lovely place to-night. I need fear no unwelcome visitors while this lasts, I think.”

Almost reduced to the necessity of groping his way with his hands (it had grown so dark, and the fog had so much increased), he returned to his lair; and, after musing for some time over the fire, busied himself in preparations for a speedy departure.

While he was collecting a few necessaries, and cramming them into his pockets, he never once ceased communing with himself in a low voice, or unclenched his teeth: which he had ground together on finishing Miss Brass’s note.

“Oh, Sampson!” he muttered, “good, worthy creature—if I could but hug you! If I could only fold you in my arms, and squeeze your ribs, as I *could* squeeze them if I once had you tight—what a meeting there would be between us! If we ever do cross each other again, Sampson, we’ll have a greeting not easily to be forgotten, trust me. This time, Sampson, this moment when all had gone on so well, was so nicely chosen! It was so thoughtful of you, so penitent, so good. Oh, if we were face to face in this room again, my white-livered man of law, how well contented one of us would be!”

There he stopped; and raising the bowl of punch to his lips, drank a long deep draught, as if it were fair water and cooling to his parched mouth. Setting it down abruptly, and re-



suming his preparations, he went on with his soliloquy.

"There's Sally," he said with flashing eyes; "the woman has spirit, determination, purpose—was she asleep, or petrified? She could have stabbed him—poisoned him safely. She might have seen this coming on. Why does she give me notice when it's too late? When he sat there,—yonder there, over there,—with his white face, and red head, and sickly smile, why didn't I know what was passing in his heart? It should have stopped beating that night, if I had been in his secret, or there are no drugs to lull a man to sleep, and no fire to burn him!"

Another draught from the bowl; and, cowering over the fire with a ferocious aspect, he muttered to himself again.

"And this, like every other trouble and anxiety I have had of late times, springs from that old dotard and his darling child—two wretched feeble wanderers! I'll be their evil genius yet. And you, sweet Kit, honest Kit, virtuous, innocent Kit, look to yourself. Where I hate, I bite. I hate you, my darling fellow, with good cause, and, proud as you are to-night, I'll have my turn.—What's that?"

A knocking at the gate he had closed. A loud and violent knocking. Then, a pause; as if those who knocked had stopped to listen. Then, the noise again, more clamorous and importunate than before.

"So soon!" said the dwarf. "And so eager! I am afraid I shall disappoint you. It's well I'm quite prepared. Sally, I thank you!"

As he spoke, he extinguished the candle. In his impetuous attempts to subdue the brightness of the fire, he overset the stove, which came tumbling forward, and fell with a crash upon the burning embers it had shot forth in its descent, leaving the room in pitchy darkness. The noise at the gate still continuing, he felt his way to the door, and stepped into the open air.

At that moment the knocking ceased. It was about eight o'clock; but the dead of the darkest night would have been as noonday, in comparison with the thick cloud which then rested upon the earth, and shrouded everything from view. He darted forward for a few paces, as if into the mouth of some dim, yawning cavern; then, thinking he had gone wrong, changed the direction of his steps; then, stood still, not knowing where to turn.

"If they would knock again," said Quilp, trying to peer into the gloom by which he was surrounded, "the sound might guide me. Come! Batter the gate once more!"

He stood listening intently, but the noise was

not renewed. Nothing was to be heard in that deserted place but, at intervals, the distant barking of dogs. The sound was far away—now in one quarter, now answered in another—nor was it any guide, for it often came from ship-board, as he knew.

"If I could find a wall or fence," said the dwarf, stretching out his arms, and walking slowly on, "I should know which way to turn. A good, black, devil's night this, to have my dear friend here! If I had but that wish, it might, for anything I cared, never be day again."

As the word passed his lips, he staggered and fell—and next moment was fighting with the cold dark water!

For all its bubbling up and rushing in his ears, he could hear the knocking at the gate again—could hear a shout that followed it—could recognise the voice. For all his struggling and plashing, he could understand that they had lost their way, and had wandered back to the point from which they started; that they were all but looking on, while he was drowned; that they were close at hand, but could not make an effort to save him; that he himself had shut and barred them out. He answered the shout—with a yell, which seemed to make the hundred fires that danced before his eyes tremble and flicker as if a gust of wind had stirred them. It was of no avail. The strong tide filled his throat, and bore him on upon its rapid current.

Another mortal struggle, and he was up again, beating the water with his hands, and looking out, with wild and glaring eyes that showed him some black object he was drifting close upon. The hull of a ship! He could touch its smooth and slippery surface with his hand. One loud cry now— But the resistless water bore him down before he could give it utterance, and, driving him under it, it carried away a corpse.

It toyed and sported with its ghastly freight, now bruising it against the slimy piles, now hiding it in mud or long rank grass, now dragging it heavily over rough stones and gravel, now feigning to yield it to its own element, and in the same action luring it away, until, tired of the ugly plaything, it flung it on a swamp—a dismal place where pirates had swung in chains through many a wintry night—and left it there to bleach.

And there it lay alone. The sky was red with flame, and the water that bore it there had been tinged with the sullen light as it flowed along. The place, the deserted carcass had left so recently a living man, was now a blazing ruin. There was something of the glare upon its face. The hair, stirred by the damp breeze, played in

a kind of mockery of death—such a mockery as the dead man himself would have delighted in when alive—about its head, and its dress fluttered idly in the night wind.

### CHAPTER LXVIII.



LIGHTED rooms, bright fires, cheerful faces, the music of glad voices, words of love and welcome, warm hearts, and tears of happiness—what a change is this! But it is to such delights that Kit is hastening.

They are awaiting him, he knows. He fears he will die of joy before he gets among them.

They have prepared him for this, all day. He is not to be carried off to-morrow with the rest, they tell him first. By degrees they let him know that doubts have arisen, that inquiries are to be made, and perhaps he may be pardoned after all. At last, the evening being come, they bring him to a room where some gentlemen are assembled. Foremost among them is his good old master, who comes and takes him by the hand. He hears that his innocence is established, and that he is pardoned. He cannot see the speaker, but he turns towards the voice, and, in trying to answer, falls down insensible.

They recover him again, and tell him he must be composed, and bear this like a man. Somebody says he must think of his poor mother. It is because he does think of her so much that the happy news has overpowered him. They crowd about him, and tell him that the truth has gone abroad, and that all the town and country ring with sympathy for his misfortunes. He has no ears for this. His thoughts, as yet, have no wider range than home. Does *she* know it? what did she say? who told her? He can speak of nothing else.

They make him drink a little wine, and talk kindly to him for awhile, until he is more collected, and can listen, and thank them. He is free to go. Mr. Garland thinks, if he feels better, it is time they went away. The gentlemen cluster round him, and shake hands with him. He feels very grateful to them for the interest they have in him, and for the kind promises they make; but the power of speech is gone again, and he has much ado to keep his feet, even though leaning on his master's arm.

As they come through the dismal passages,

some officers of the gaol who are in waiting there congratulate him, in their rough way, on his release. The newsmonger is of the number, but his manner is not quite hearty—there is something of surliness in his compliments. He looks upon Kit as an intruder, as one who has obtained admission to that place on false pretences, who has enjoyed a privilege without being duly qualified. He may be a very good sort of young man, he thinks, but he has no business there, and the sooner he is gone the better.

The last door shuts behind them. They have passed the outer wall, and stand in the open air—in the street he has so often pictured to himself when hemmed in by the gloomy stones, and which has been in all his dreams. It seems wider and more busy than it used to be. The night is bad, and yet how cheerful and gay in his eyes! One of the gentlemen, in taking leave of him, pressed some money into his hand. He has not counted it; but, when they have gone a few paces beyond the box for poor Prisoners, he hastily returns and drops it in.

Mr. Garland has a coach waiting in a neighbouring street, and, taking Kit inside with him, bids the man drive home. At first, they can only travel at a foot-pace, and then with torches going on before, because of the heavy fog. But, as they get farther from the river, and leave the closer portions of the town behind, they are able to dispense with this precaution, and to proceed at a brisker rate. On the road, hard galloping would be too slow for Kit; but, when they are drawing near their journey's end, he begs they may go more slowly, and, when the house appears in sight, that they may stop—only for a minute or two, to give him time to breathe.

But there is no stopping then, for the old gentleman speaks stoutly to him, the horses mend their pace, and they are already at the garden-gate. Next minute they are at the door. There is a noise of tongues, and tread of feet, inside. It opens. Kit rushes in, and finds his mother clinging round his neck.

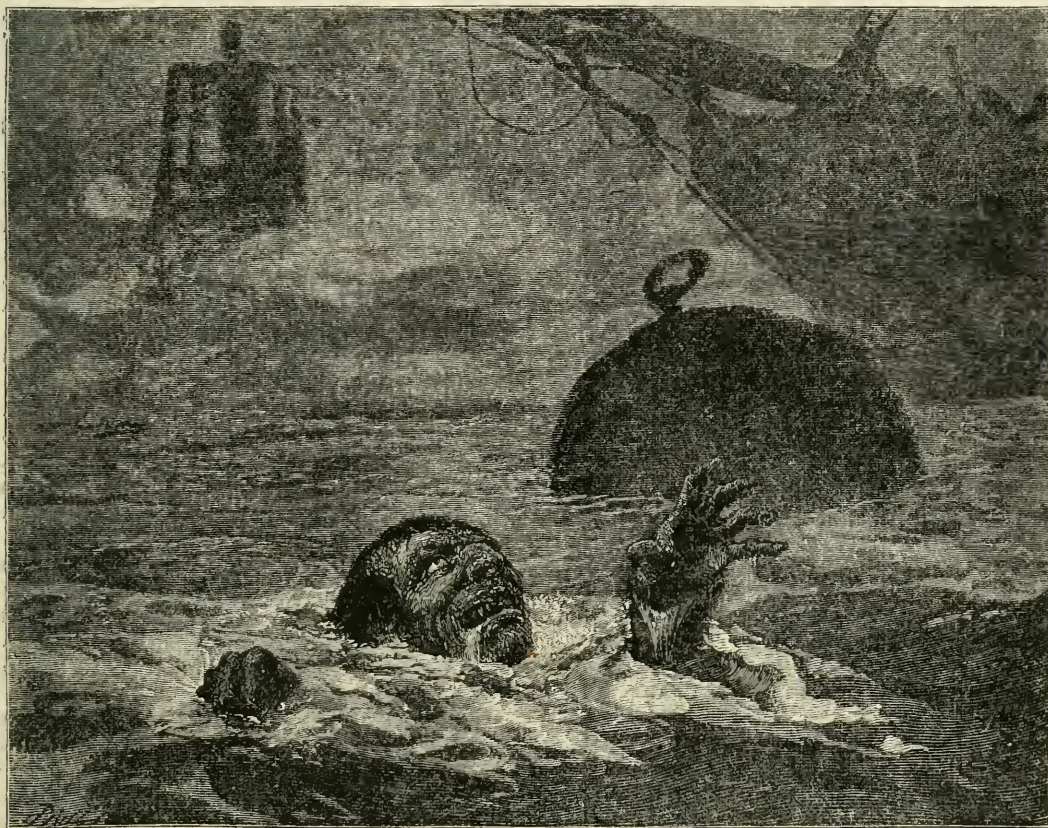
And there, too, is the ever-faithful Barbara's mother, still holding the baby as if she had never put it down since that sad day when they little hoped to have such joy as this—there she is, Heaven bless her, crying her eyes out, and sobbing as never woman sobbed before; and there is little Barbara—poor little Barbara, so much thinner and so much paler, and yet so very pretty—trembling like a leaf, and supporting herself against the wall; and there is Mrs.



Garland, neater and nicer than ever, fainting away stone dead with nobody to help her; and there is Mr. Abel, violently blowing his nose, and wanting to embrace everybody; and there is the single gentleman hovering round them all, and constant to nothing for an instant; and there is that good, dear, thoughtful little Jacob, sitting all alone by himself on the bottom stair, with his hands on his knees like an old man, roaring fearfully without giving any trouble to

anybody; and each and all of them are for the time clean out of their wits, and do jointly and severally commit all manner of follies.

And even when the rest have in some measure come to themselves again, and can find words and smiles, Barbara—that soft-hearted, gentle, foolish little Barbara—is suddenly missed, and found to be in a swoon by herself in the back-parlour, from which swoon she falls into hysterics, and from which hysterics into a swoon



“THE STRONG TIDE FILLED HIS THROAT, AND BORE HIM ON UPON ITS RAPID CURRENT.”

again, and is, indeed, so bad that, despite a mortal quantity of vinegar and cold water, she is hardly a bit better at last than she was at first. Then, Kit's mother comes in and says, will he come and speak to her? and Kit says “Yes,” and goes; and he says in a kind voice “Barbara!” and Barbara's mother tells her that “it's only Kit;” and Barbara says (with her eyes closed all the time), “Oh! but is it him indeed?” and Barbara's mother says, “To be

sure it is, my dear; there's nothing the matter now.” And, in further assurance that he's safe and sound, Kit speaks to her again; and then Barbara goes off into another fit of laughter, and then into another fit of crying; and then Barbara's mother and Kit's mother nod to each other, and pretend to scold her—but only to bring her to herself the faster, bless you!—and being experienced matrons, and acute at perceiving the first dawning symptoms of recovery,

they comfort Kit with the assurance that "she'll do now," and so dismiss him to the place from whence he came.

Well! In that place (which is the next room) there are decanters of wine, and all that sort of thing, set out as grand as if Kit and his friends were first-rate company; and there is little Jacob, walking, as the popular phrase is, into a home-made plum-cake at a most surprising pace, and keeping his eye on the figs and oranges which are to follow, and making the best use of his time, you may believe. Kit no sooner comes in than that single gentleman (never was such a busy gentleman) charges all the glasses—bumpers—and drinks his health, and tells him he shall never want a friend while *he* lives; and so does Mr. Garland, and so does Mrs. Garland, and so does Mr. Abel. But, even this honour and distinction is not all, for the single gentleman forthwith pulls out of his pocket a massive silver watch—going hard, and right to half a second—and upon the back of this watch is engraved Kit's name, with flourishes all over; and, in short, it is Kit's watch, bought expressly for him, and presented to him on the spot. You may rest assured that Mr. and Mrs. Garland can't help hinting about their present in store, and that Mr. Abel tells outright that he has his; and that Kit is the happiest of the happy.

There is one friend he has not seen yet, and, as he cannot be conveniently introduced into the family circle, by reason of his being an iron-shod quadruped, Kit takes the first opportunity of slipping away and hurrying to the stable. The moment he lays his hand upon the latch, the pony neighs the loudest pony's greeting; before he has crossed the threshold, the pony is capering about his loose box (for he brooks not the indignity of a halter), mad to give him welcome; and, when Kit goes up to caress and pat him, the pony rubs his nose against his coat, and fondles him more lovingly than ever pony fondled man. It is the crowning circumstance of his earnest, heartfelt reception; and Kit fairly puts his arm round Whisker's neck and hugs him.

But how comes Barbara to trip in there? And how smart she is again! She has been at her glass since she recovered. How comes Barbara in the stable, of all places in the world? Why, since Kit has been away, the pony would take his food from nobody but her, and Barbara, you see, not dreaming Christopher was there, and just looking in to see that everything was right, has come upon him unawares. Blushing little Barbara!

It may be that Kit has caressed the pony enough; it may be that there are even better things to caress than ponies. He leaves him for Barbara at any rate, and hopes she is better. Yes. Barbara is a great deal better. She is afraid—and here Barbara looks down and blushes more—that he must have thought her very foolish. "Not at all," says Kit. Barbara is glad of that, and coughs—Hem!—just the slightest cough possible—not more than that.

What a discreet pony when he chooses! He is as quiet, now, as if he were of marble. He has a very knowing look, but that he always has. "We have hardly had time to shake hands, Barbara," says Kit. Barbara gives him hers. Why, she is trembling now! Foolish, fluttering Barbara!

Arm's length? The length of an arm is not much. Barbara's was not a long arm, by any means, and besides, she didn't hold it out straight, but bent a little. Kit was so near her when they shook hands, that he could see a small tiny tear, yet trembling on an eyelash. It was natural that he should look at it, unknown to Barbara. It was natural that Barbara should raise her eyes unconsciously, and find him out. Was it natural that at that instant, without any previous impulse or design, Kit should kiss Barbara? He did it, whether or no. Barbara said "For shame," but let him do it too—twice. He might have done it thrice, but the pony kicked up his heels and shook his head, as if he were suddenly taken with convulsions of delight, and Barbara, being frightened, ran away—not straight to where her mother and Kit's mother were, though, lest they should see how red her cheeks were, and should ask her why. Sly little Barbara!

When the first transports of the whole party had subsided, and Kit and his mother, and Barbara and her mother, with little Jacob and the baby to boot, had had their suppers together—which there was no hurrying over, for they were going to stop there all night—Mr. Garland called Kit to him, and, taking him into a room where they could be alone, told him that he had something yet to say, which would surprise him greatly. Kit looked so anxious and turned so pale on hearing this, that the old gentleman hastened to add, he would be agreeably surprised; and asked him if he would be ready next morning for a journey.

"For a journey, sir!" cried Kit.

"In company with me and my friend in the next room. Can you guess its purpose?"

Kit turned paler yet, and shook his head.



"Oh yes! I think you do already," said his master. "Try."

Kit murmured something rather rambling and unintelligible, but he plainly pronounced the words "Miss Nell" three or four times—shaking his head while he did so, as if he would add that there was no hope of that.

But Mr. Garland, instead of saying "Try again," as Kit had made sure he would, told him, very seriously, that he had guessed right.

"The place of their retreat is indeed discovered," he said, "at last. And that is our journey's end."

Kit faltered out such questions as, where was it, and how had it been found, and how long since, and was she well and happy?

"Happy she is, beyond all doubt," said Mr. Garland. "And well, I—I trust she will be soon. She has been weak and ailing, as I learn, but she was better when I heard this morning, and they were full of hope. Sit you down, and you shall hear the rest."

Scarcely venturing to draw his breath, Kit did as he was told. Mr. Garland then related to him how he had a brother (of whom he would remember to have heard him speak, and whose picture, taken when he was a young man, hung in the best room), and how this brother lived a long way off, in a country place, with an old clergyman who had been his early friend. How, although they loved each other as brothers should, they had not met for many years, but had communicated by letter from time to time, always looking forward to some period when they would take each other by the hand once more, and still letting the Present time steal on, as it was the habit of men to do, and suffering the Future to melt into the Past. How this brother, whose temper was very mild and quiet and retiring—such as Mr. Abel's—was greatly beloved by the simple people among whom he dwelt, who quite revered the Bachelor (for so they called him), and had every one experienced his charity and benevolence. How even those slight circumstances had come to his knowledge very slowly and in course of years, for the Bachelor was one of those whose goodness shuns the light, and who have more pleasure in discovering and extolling the good deeds of others than in trumpeting their own, be they never so commendable. How, for that reason, he seldom told them of his village friends; but how, for all that, his mind had become so full of two among them—a child and an old man, to whom he had been very kind—that, in a letter received a few days before, he had dwelt upon them from first to last, and had told such a tale of

their wandering, and mutual love, that few could read it without being moved to tears. How he, the recipient of that letter, was directly led to the belief that these must be the very wanderers for whom so much search had been made, and whom Heaven had directed to his brother's care. How he had written for such further information as would put the fact beyond all doubt; how it had that morning arrived; had confirmed his first impression into a certainty; and was the immediate cause of that journey being planned, which they were to take to-morrow.

"In the meantime," said the old gentleman, rising, and laying his hand on Kit's shoulder, "you have great need of rest; for such a day as this would wear out the strongest man. Good night, and Heaven send our journey may have a prosperous ending!"

#### CHAPTER LXIX.

**K**IT was no sluggard next morning, but, springing from his bed some time before day, began to prepare for his welcome expedition. The hurry of spirits consequent upon the events of yesterday, and the unexpected intelligence he had heard at night, had troubled his sleep through the long dark hours, and summoned such uneasy dreams about his pillow that it was rest to rise.

But had it been the beginning of some great labour with the same end in view—had it been the commencement of a long journey, to be performed on foot in that inclement season of the year, to be pursued under every privation and difficulty, and to be achieved only with great distress, fatigue, and suffering—had it been the dawn of some painful enterprise, certain to task his utmost powers of resolution and endurance, and to need his utmost fortitude, but only likely to end, if happily achieved, in good fortune and delight to Nell—Kit's cheerful zeal would have been as highly roused: Kit's ardour and impatience would have been, at least, the same.

Nor was he alone excited and eager. Before he had been up a quarter of an hour the whole house was astir and busy. Everybody hurried to do something towards facilitating the preparations. The single gentleman, it is true, could do nothing himself, but he overlooked everybody else, and was more locomotive than anybody. The work of packing and making ready went briskly on, and by daybreak every preparation

for the journey was completed. Then, Kit began to wish they had not been quite so nimble; for the travelling carriage which had been hired for the occasion was not to arrive until nine o'clock, and there was nothing but breakfast to fill up the intervening blank of one hour and a half.

Yes, there was, though. There was Barbara. Barbara was busy, to be sure, but so much the better—Kit could help her, and that would pass away the time better than any means that could be devised. Barbara had no objection to this arrangement, and Kit, tracking out the idea which had come upon him so suddenly overnight, began to think that surely Barbara was fond of him, and surely he was fond of Barbara.

Now, Barbara, if the truth must be told—as it must and ought to be—Barbara seemed, of all the little household, to take least pleasure in the bustle of the occasion; and when Kit, in the openness of his heart, told her how glad and overjoyed it made him, Barbara became more downcast still, and seemed to have even less pleasure in it than before.

“You have not been home so long, Christopher,” said Barbara—and it is impossible to tell how carelessly she said it—“you have not been home so long, that you need be glad to go away again, I should think.”

“But for such a purpose,” returned Kit. “To bring back Miss Nell! To see her again! Only think of that! I am so pleased, too, to think that *you* will see her, Barbara, at last.”

Barbara did not absolutely say that she felt no great gratification on this point, but she expressed the sentiment so plainly by one little toss of her head, that Kit was quite disconcerted, and wondered, in his simplicity, why she was so cool about it.

“You’ll say she has the sweetest and beautifullest face you ever saw, I know,” said Kit, rubbing his hands. “I’m sure you’ll say that!”

Barbara tossed her head again.

“What’s the matter, Barbara?” said Kit.

“Nothing,” cried Barbara. And Barbara pouted—not sulkily, or in an ugly manner, but just enough to make her look more cherry-lipped than ever.

There is no school in which a pupil gets on so fast as that in which Kit became a scholar when he gave Barbara the kiss. He saw what Barbara meant now—he had his lesson by heart all at once—she was the book—there it was before him, as plain as print.

“Barbara,” said Kit, “you’re not cross with me?”

Oh dear no! Why should Barbara be cross?

And what right had she to be cross? And what did it matter whether she was cross or no? Who minded *her*?

“Why, *I* do,” said Kit. “Of course I do.”

Barbara didn’t see why it was of course, at all. Kit was sure she must. Would she think again?

Certainly Barbara would think again. No, she didn’t see why it was of course. She didn’t understand what Christopher meant. And besides, she was sure they wanted her up-stairs by this time, and she must go, indeed—

“No, but, Barbara,” said Kit, detaining her gently, “let us part friends. I was always thinking of you in my troubles. I should have been a great deal more miserable than I was, if it hadn’t been for you.”

Goodness gracious, how pretty Barbara was when she coloured—and when she trembled, like a little shrinking bird!

“I am telling you the truth, Barbara, upon my word, but not half so strong as I could wish,” said Kit. “When I want you to be pleased to see Miss Nell, it’s only because I should like you to be pleased with what pleases me—that’s all. As to her, Barbara, I think I could almost die to do her service, but you would think so too, if you knew her as I do. I am sure you would.”

Barbara was touched, and sorry to have appeared indifferent.

“I have been used, you see,” said Kit, “to talk and think of her almost as if she was an angel. When I look forward to meeting her again, I think of her smiling as she used to do, and being glad to see me, and putting out her hand and saying, ‘It’s my own old Kit,’ or some such words as those—like what she used to say. I think of seeing her happy, and with friends about her, and brought up as she deserves, and as she ought to be. When I think of myself, it’s as her old servant, and one that loved her dearly, as his kind, good, gentle mistress; and who would have gone—yes, and still would go—through any harm to serve her. Once I couldn’t help being afraid that, if she came back with friends about her, she might forget, or be ashamed of having known, a humble lad like me, and so might speak coldly, which would have cut me, Barbara, deeper than I can tell. But when I came to think again, I felt sure that I was doing her wrong in this; and so I went on, as I did at first, hoping to see her once more, just as she used to be. Hoping this, and remembering what she was, has made me feel as if I would always try to please her, and always be what I should like to seem to her if I was still her servant.



If I'm the better for that—and I don't think I'm the worse—I am grateful to her for it, and love and honour her the more. That's the plain honest truth, dear Barbara, upon my word it is!"

Little Barbara was not of a wayward or capricious nature, and, being full of remorse, melted into tears. To what more conversation this might have led, we need not stop to inquire; for the wheels of the carriage were heard at that moment, and, being followed by a smart ring at the garden-gate, caused the bustle in the house, which had lain dormant for a short time, to burst again into tenfold life and vigour.

Simultaneously with the travelling equipage arrived Mr. Chuckster in a hackney cab, with certain papers and supplies of money for the single gentleman, into whose hands he delivered them. This duty discharged, he subsided into the bosom of the family: and, entertaining himself with a strolling or peripatetic breakfast, watched with a genteel indifference the process of loading the carriage.

"Snobby's in this I see, sir?" he said to Mr. Abel Garland. "I thought he wasn't in the last trip because it was expected that his presence wouldn't be acceptable to the ancient buffalo."

"To whom, sir?" demanded Mr. Abel.

"To the old gentleman," returned Mr. Chuckster, slightly abashed.

"Our client prefers to take him now," said Mr. Abel drily. "There is no longer any need for that precaution, as my father's relationship to a gentleman in whom the objects of his search have full confidence will be a sufficient guarantee for the friendly nature of their errand."

"Ah!" thought Mr. Chuckster, looking out of window, "anybody but me! Snobby before me, of course. He didn't happen to take that particular five-pound note, but I have not the smallest doubt that he's always up to something of that sort. I always said it, long before this came out. Devilish pretty girl that! 'Pon my soul, an amazing little creature!"

Barbara was the subject of Mr. Chuckster's commendations: and, as she was lingering near the carriage (all being now ready for its departure), that gentleman was suddenly seized with a strong interest in the proceedings, which impelled him to swagger down the garden, and take up his position at a convenient ogling distance. Having had great experience of the sex, and being perfectly acquainted with all those little artifices which find the readiest road to their hearts, Mr. Chuckster, on taking his ground, planted one hand on his hip, and with the other adjusted his flowing hair. This is a favourite attitude in the polite circles, and, accompanied

with a graceful whistling, has been known to do immense execution.

Such, however, is the difference between town and country, that nobody took the smallest notice of this insinuating figure; the wretches being wholly engaged in bidding the travellers farewell, in kissing hands to each other, waving handkerchiefs, and the like tame and vulgar practices. For, now, the single gentleman and Mr. Garland were in the carriage, and the post-boy was in the saddle, and Kit, well wrapped and muffled up, was in the rumble behind; and Mrs. Garland was there, and Mr. Abel was there, and Kit's mother was there, and little Jacob was there, and Barbara's mother was visible in remote perspective, nursing the ever-wakeful baby; and all were nodding, beckoning, curtsying, or crying out, "Good-bye!" with all the energy they could express. In another minute the carriage was out of sight; and Mr. Chuckster remained alone on the spot where it had lately been, with a vision of Kit standing up in the rumble waving his hand to Barbara, and of Barbara in the full light and lustre of his eyes—*his* eyes—Chuckster's—Chuckster the successful—on whom ladies of quality had looked with favour from phaetons in the parks on Sundays—waving hers to Kit.

How Mr. Chuckster, entranced by this monstrous fact, stood for some time rooted to the earth, protesting within himself that Kit was the Prince of felonious characters, and very Emperor or Great Mogul of Snobs, and how he clearly traced this revolting circumstance back to that old villainy of the shilling, are matters foreign to our purpose; which is to track the rolling wheels, and bear the travellers company on their cold, bleak journey.

It was a bitter day. A keen wind was blowing, and rushed against them fiercely: bleaching the hard ground, shaking the white frost from the trees and hedges, and whirling it away like dust. But, little Kit cared for weather. There was a freedom and freshness in the wind, as it came howling by, which, let it cut never so sharp, was welcome. As it swept on with its cloud of frost, bearing down the dry twigs and boughs and withered leaves, and carrying them away pell-mell, it seemed as though some general sympathy had got abroad, and everything was in a hurry, like themselves. The harder the gusts, the better progress they appeared to make. It was a good thing to go struggling and fighting forward, vanquishing them one by one; to watch them driving up, gathering strength and fury as they came along; to bend for a moment as they whistled past; and then to look back and see them speed away, their hoarse noise dying in

the distance, and the stout trees cowering down before them.

All day long it blew without cessation. The night was clear and starlight, but the wind had not fallen, and the cold was piercing. Sometimes—towards the end of a long stage—Kit could not help wishing it were a little warmer: but when they stopped to change horses, and he had had a good run, and what with that, and the bustle of paying the old postillion, and rousing the new one, and running to and fro again until the horses were put to, he was so warm that the blood tingled and smarted in his fingers' ends—then he felt as if to have it one degree less cold would be to lose half the delight and glory of the journey: and up he jumped again, right cheerily, singing to the merry music of the wheels as they rolled away, and, leaving the townspeople in their warm beds, pursued their course along the lonely road.

Meantime the two gentlemen inside, who were little disposed to sleep, beguiled the time with conversation. As both were anxious and expectant, it naturally turned upon the subject of their expedition, on the manner in which it had been brought about, and on the hopes and fears they entertained respecting it. Of the former they had many, of the latter few—none, perhaps, beyond that indefinable uneasiness which is inseparable from suddenly-awakened hope and protracted expectation.

In one of the pauses of their discourse, and when half the night had worn away, the single gentleman, who had gradually become more and more silent and thoughtful, turned to his companion, and said, abruptly:

“Are you a good listener?”

“Like most other men, I suppose,” returned Mr. Garland, smiling. “I can be, if I am interested; and, if not interested, I should still try to appear so. Why do you ask?”

“I have a short narrative on my lips,” rejoined his friend, “and will try you with it. It is very brief.”

Pausing for no reply, he laid his hand on the old gentleman's sleeve, and proceeded thus:

“There were once two brothers, who loved each other dearly. There was a disparity in their ages—some twelve years. I am not sure but they may insensibly have loved each other the better for that reason. Wide as the interval between them was, however, they became rivals too soon. The deepest and strongest affection of both their hearts settled upon one object.

“The youngest—there were reasons for *his* being sensitive and watchful—was the first to find this out. I will not tell you what misery

he underwent, what agony of soul he knew, how great his mental struggle was. He had been a sickly child. His brother, patient and considerate in the midst of his own high health and strength, had many and many a day denied himself the sports he loved, to sit beside his couch, telling him old stories till his pale face lighted up with an unwonted glow; to carry him in his arms to some green spot, where he could tend the poor pensive boy as he looked upon the bright summer day, and saw all nature healthy but himself; to be, in any way, his fond and faithful nurse. I may not dwell on all he did to make the poor, weak creature love him, or my tale would have no end. But, when the time of trial came, the younger brother's heart was full of those old days. Heaven strengthened it to repay the sacrifices of inconsiderate youth by one of thoughtful manhood. He left his brother to be happy. The truth never passed his lips, and he quitted the country, hoping to die abroad.

“The elder brother married her. She was in Heaven before long, and left him with an infant daughter.

“If you have seen the picture-gallery of any one old family, you will remember how the same face and figure—often the fairest and slightest of them all—come upon you in different generations; and how you trace the same sweet girl through a long line of portraits—never growing old or changing—the Good Angel of the race—abiding by them in all reverses—redeeming all their sins.

“In this daughter the mother lived again. You may judge with what devotion he who lost that mother almost in the winning, clung to this girl, her breathing image. She grew to womanhood, and gave her heart to one who could not know its worth. Well! Her fond father could not see her pine and droop. He might be more deserving than he thought him. He surely might become so, with a wife like her. He joined their hands, and they were married.

“Through all the misery that followed this union; through all the cold neglect and undeserved reproach; through all the poverty he brought upon her; through all the struggles of their daily life, too mean and pitiful to tell, but dreadful to endure; she toiled on, in the deep devotion of her spirit, and in her better nature, as only women can. Her means and substance wasted; her father nearly beggared by her husband's hand, and the hourly witness (for they lived now under one roof) of her ill-usage and unhappiness,—she never, but for him, bewailed her fate. Patient, and upheld by strong affec-



tion to the last, she died a widow of some three weeks' date, leaving to her father's care two orphans; one a son of ten or twelve years old; the other a girl—such another infant child—the same in helplessness, in age, in form, in feature—as she had been herself when her young mother died.

“The elder brother, grandfather to these two children, was now a broken man; crushed and borne down, less by the weight of years than by the heavy hand of sorrow. With the wreck of his possessions, he began to trade—in pictures first, and then in curious ancient things. He had entertained a fondness for such matters from a boy, and the tastes he had cultivated were now to yield him an anxious and precarious subsistence.

“The boy grew like his father in mind and person; the girl so like her mother, that when the old man had her on his knee, and looked into her mild blue eyes, he felt as if awakening from a wretched dream, and his daughter were a little child again. The wayward boy soon spurned the shelter of his roof, and sought associates more congenial to his taste. The old man and the child dwelt alone together.

“It was then, when the love of two dead people who had been nearest and dearest to his heart was all transferred to this slight creature; when her face, constantly before him, reminded him, from hour to hour, of the too early change he had seen in such another—of all the sufferings he had watched and known, and all his child had undergone; when the young man's profligate and hardened course drained him of money as his father's had, and even sometimes occasioned them temporary privation and distress; it was then that there began to beset him, and to be ever in his mind, a gloomy dread of poverty and want. He had no thought for himself in this. His fear was for the child. It was a spectre in his house, and haunted him night and day.

“The younger brother had been a traveller in many countries, and had made his pilgrimage through life alone. His voluntary banishment had been misconstrued, and he had borne (not without pain) reproach and slight, for doing that which had wrung his heart, and cast a mournful shadow on his path. Apart from this, communication between him and the elder was difficult and uncertain, and often failed; still, it was not so wholly broken off but that he learnt—with long blanks and gaps between each interval of information—all that I have told you now.

“Then, dreams of their young, happy life—happy to him, though laden with pain and early

care—visited his pillow yet oftener than before; and every night, a boy again, he was at his brother's side. With the utmost speed he could exert, he settled his affairs; converted into money all the goods he had; and, with honourable wealth enough for both, with open heart and hand, with limbs that trembled as they bore him on, with emotion such as men can hardly bear and live, arrived one evening at his brother's door!”

The narrator, whose voice had faltered lately, stopped. “The rest,” said Mr. Garland, pressing his hand after a pause, “I know.”

“Yes,” rejoined his friend, “we may spare ourselves the sequel. You know the poor result of all my search. Even when, by dint of such inquiries as the utmost vigilance and sagacity could set on foot, we found they had been seen with two poor travelling showmen—and in time discovered the men themselves—and in time the actual place of their retreat; even then we were too late. Pray God we are not too late again!”

“We cannot be,” said Mr. Garland. “This time we must succeed.”

“I have believed and hoped so,” returned the other. “I try to believe and hope so still. But a heavy weight has fallen on my spirits, my good friend, and the sadness that gathers over me will yield to neither hope nor reason.”

“That does not surprise me,” said Mr. Garland; “it is a natural consequence of the events you have recalled; of this dreary time and place; and, above all, of this wild and dismal night. A dismal night indeed! Hark! how the wind is howling!”

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## CHAPTER LXX.

**D**AY broke, and found them still upon their way. Since leaving home, they had halted here and there for necessary refreshment, and had frequently been delayed, especially in the night-time, by waiting for fresh horses. They had made no other stoppages, but the weather continued rough, and the roads were often steep and heavy. It would be night again before they reached their place of destination.

Kit, all bluff and hardened with the cold, went on manfully; and, having enough to do to keep his blood circulating, to picture to himself the happy end of this adventurous journey, and to look about him and be amazed at everything,

had little spare time for thinking of discomforts. Though his impatience, and that of his fellow-travellers, rapidly increased as the day waned, the hours did not stand still. The short daylight of winter soon faded away, and it was dark again when they had yet many miles to travel.

As it grew dusk, the wind fell; its distant moanings were more low and mournful; and, as it came creeping up the road, and rattling covertly among the dry brambles on either hand, it seemed like some great phantom for whom the way was narrow, whose garments rustled as it stalked along. By degrees it lulled and died away, and then it came on to snow.

The flakes fell fast and thick, soon covering the ground some inches deep, and spreading abroad a solemn stillness. The rolling wheels were noiseless, and the sharp ring and clatter of the horses' hoofs became a dull, muffled tramp. The life of their progress seemed to be slowly hushed, and something death-like to usurp its place.

Shading his eyes from the falling snow, which froze upon their lashes, and obscured his sight, Kit often tried to catch the earliest glimpse of twinkling lights denoting their approach to some not distant town. He could descry objects enough at such times, but none correctly. Now, a tall church spire appeared in view, which presently became a tree, a barn, a shadow on the ground, thrown on it by their own bright lamps. Now, there were horsemen, foot-passengers, carriages going on before, or meeting them in narrow ways; which, when they were close upon them, turned to shadows too. A wall, a ruin, a sturdy gable-end, would rise up in the road; and, when they were plunging headlong at it, would be the road itself. Strange turnings, too, bridges, and sheets of water, appeared to start up here and there, making the way doubtful and uncertain; and yet they were on the same bare road, and these things, like the others, as they were passed, turned into dim illusions.

He descended slowly from his seat—for his limbs were numbed—when they arrived at a lone posting-house, and inquired how far they had to go to reach their journey's end. It was a late hour in such by-places, and the people were abed; but a voice answered from an upper window, Ten miles. The ten minutes that ensued appeared an hour; but, at the end of that time, a shivering figure led out the horses they required, and, after another brief delay, they were again in motion.

It was a cross-country road, full, after the first three or four miles, of holes and cart-ruts, which,

being covered by the snow, were so many pitfalls to the trembling horses, and obliged them to keep a foot-pace. As it was next to impossible for men so much agitated as they were by this time to sit still and move so slowly, all three got out and plodded on behind the carriage. The distance seemed interminable, and the walk was most laborious. As each was thinking within himself that the driver must have lost his way, a church bell, close at hand, struck the hour of midnight, and the carriage stopped. It had moved softly enough, but, when it ceased to crunch the snow, the silence was as startling as if some great noise had been replaced by perfect stillness.

"This is the place, gentlemen," said the driver, dismounting from his horse, and knocking at the door of a little inn. "Halloa! Past twelve o'clock is the dead of night here."

The knocking was loud and long, but it failed to rouse the drowsy inmates. All continued dark and silent as before. They fell back a little, and looked up at the windows, which were mere black patches in the whitened house-front. No light appeared. The house might have been deserted, or the sleepers dead, for any air of life it had about it.

They spoke together, with a strange inconsistency, in whispers: unwilling to disturb again the dreary echoes they had just now raised.

"Let us go on," said the younger brother, "and leave this good fellow to wake them, if he can. I cannot rest until I know that we are not too late. Let us go on, in the name of Heaven!"

They did so, leaving the postillion to order such accommodation as the house afforded, and to renew his knocking. Kit accompanied them with a little bundle, which he had hung in the carriage when they left home, and had not forgotten since—the bird in his old cage—just as she had left him. She would be glad to see her bird, he knew.

The road wound gently downward. As they proceeded, they lost sight of the church whose clock they had heard, and of the small village clustering round it. The knocking, which was now renewed, and which in that stillness they could plainly hear, troubled them. They wished the man would forbear, or that they had told him not to break the silence until they returned.

The old church tower, clad in a ghostly garb of pure cold white, again rose up before them, and a few moments brought them close beside it. A venerable building—grey, even in the midst of the hoary landscape. An ancient sundial on the belfry wall was nearly hidden by the



snow-drift, and scarcely to be known for what it was. Time itself seemed to have grown dull and old, as if no day were ever to displace the melancholy night.

A wicket-gate was close at hand, but there was more than one path across the churchyard to which it led, and, uncertain which to take, they came to a stand again.

The village street—if street that could be called which was an irregular cluster of poor cottages of many heights and ages, some with their fronts, some with their backs, and some with gable-ends towards the road, with here and there a sign-post, or a shed encroaching on the path—was close at hand. There was a faint light in a chamber window not far off, and Kit ran towards that house to ask their way.

His first shout was answered by an old man within, who presently appeared at the casement, wrapping some garment round his throat as a protection from the cold, and demanded who was abroad at that unseasonable hour wanting him.

"'Tis hard weather this," he grumbled, "and not a night to call me up in. My trade is not of that kind that I need be roused from bed. The business on which folks want me will keep cold, especially at this season. What do you want?"

"I would not have roused you if I had known you were old and ill," said Kit.

"Old!" repeated the other peevishly. "How do you know I am old? Not so old as you think, friend, perhaps. As to being ill, you will find many young people in worse case than I am. More's the pity that it should be so—not that I should be strong and hearty for my years, I mean, but that they should be weak and tender. I ask your pardon, though," said the old man, "if I spoke rather rough at first. My eyes are not good at night—that's neither age nor illness; they never were—and I didn't see you were a stranger."

"I am sorry to call you from your bed," said Kit, "but those gentlemen you may see by the churchyard gate are strangers too, who have just arrived from a long journey, and seek the parsonage-house. You can direct us?"

"I should be able to," answered the old man in a trembling voice, "for, come next summer, I have been sexton here good fifty years. The right-hand path, friend, is the road.—There is no ill news for our good gentleman, I hope?"

Kit thanked him, and made him a hasty answer in the negative. He was turning back, when his attention was caught by the voice of

a child. Looking up, he saw a very little creature at a neighbouring window.

"What is that?" cried the child earnestly. "Has my dream come true? Pray speak to me, whoever that is awake and up."

"Poor boy!" said the sexton, before Kit could answer, "how goes it, darling?"

"Has my dream come true?" exclaimed the child again, in a voice so fervent that it might have thrilled to the heart of any listener. "But no, that can never be! How could it be? Oh! how could it?"

"I guess his meaning," said the sexton. "To bed again, poor boy!"

"Ay!" cried the child in a burst of despair. "I knew it could never be; I felt too sure of that, before I asked! But, all to-night, and last night too, it was the same. I never fall asleep but that cruel dream comes back."

"Try to sleep again," said the old man soothingly. "It will go in time."

"No, no, I would rather that it stayed—cruel as it is, I would rather that it stayed," rejoined the child. "I am not afraid to have it in my sleep, but I am so sad—so very, very sad."

The old man blessed him, the child in tears replied Good night, and Kit was again alone.

He hurried back, moved by what he had heard, though more by the child's manner than by anything he had said, as his meaning was hidden from him. They took the path indicated by the sexton, and soon arrived before the parsonage wall. Turning round to look about them when they had got thus far, they saw, among some ruined buildings at a distance, one single solitary light.

It shone from what appeared to be an old oriel window, and being surrounded by the deep shadows of overhanging walls, sparkled like a star. Bright and glimmering as the stars above their heads, lonely and motionless as they, it seemed to claim some kindred with the eternal lamps of Heaven, and to burn in fellowship with them.

"What light is that?" said the younger brother.

"It is surely," said Mr. Garland, "in the ruin where they live. I see no other ruin hereabouts."

"They cannot," returned the brother hastily, "be waking at this late hour——"

Kit interposed directly, and begged that, while they rang and waited at the gate, they would let him make his way to where this light was shining, and try to ascertain if any people were about. Obtaining the permission he desired, he darted off with breathless eagerness, and,

still carrying the bird-cage in his hand, made straight towards the spot.

It was not easy to hold that pace among the graves, and at another time he might have gone more slowly, or round by the path. Unmindful of all obstacles, however, he pressed forward without slackening his speed, and soon arrived within a few yards of the window.

He approached as softly as he could, and, advancing so near the wall as to brush the whitened ivy with his dress, listened. There was no sound inside. The church itself was not more quiet. Touching the glass with his cheek, he listened again. No. And yet there was such a silence all around that he felt sure he could have heard even the breathing of a sleeper, if there had been one there.

A strange circumstance, a light in such a place at that time of night, with no one near it.

A curtain was drawn across the lower portion of the window, and he could not see into the room. But there was no shadow thrown upon it from within. To have gained a footing on the wall, and tried to look in from above, would have been attended with some danger—certainly with some noise, and the chance of terrifying the child, if that really were her habitation. Again and again he listened; again and again the same wearisome blank.

Leaving the spot with slow and cautious steps, and skirting the ruin for a few paces, he came at length to a door. He knocked. No answer. But there was a curious noise inside. It was difficult to determine what it was. It bore a resemblance to the low moaning of one in pain, but it was not that, being far too regular and constant. Now it seemed a kind of song, now a wail—scemed, that is, to his changing fancy, for the sound itself was never changed or checked. It was unlike anything he had ever heard; and in its tone there was something fearful, and chilling, and unearthly.

The listener's blood ran colder now than ever it had done in frost and snow, but he knocked again. There was no answer, and the sound went on without any interruption. He laid his hand softly upon the latch, and put his knee against the door. It was secured on the inside, but yielded to the pressure, and turned upon its hinges. He saw the glimmering of a fire upon the old walls, and entered.

## CHAPTER LXXI.

**T**HE dull, red glow of a wood fire—for no lamp or candle burnt within the room—showed him a figure, seated on the hearth with its back towards him, bending over the fitful light. The attitude was that of one who sought the heat. It was, and yet was not. The stooping posture and the cowering form were there, but no hands were stretched out to meet the grateful warmth, no shrug or shiver compared its luxury with the piercing cold outside. With limbs huddled together, head bowed down, arms crossed upon the breast, and fingers tightly clenched, it rocked to and fro upon its seat without a moment's pause, accompanying the action with the mournful sound he had heard.

The heavy door had closed behind him, on his entrance, with a crash that made him start. The figure neither spoke, nor turned to look, nor gave in any other way the faintest sign of having heard the noise. The form was that of an old man, his white head akin in colour to the mouldering embers upon which he gazed. He, and the failing light and dying fire, the time-worn room, the solitude, the wasted life, and gloom, were all in fellowship. Ashes, and dust, and ruin!

Kit tried to speak, and did pronounce some words, though what they were he scarcely knew. Still the same terrible low cry went on—still the same rocking in the chair—the same stricken figure was there, unchanged and heedless of his presence.

He had his hand upon the latch, when something in the form—distinctly seen as one log broke and fell, and, as it fell, blazed up—arrested it. He returned to where he had stood before—advanced a pace—another—another still. Another, and he saw the face. Yes! Changed as it was, he knew it well.

“Master!” he cried, stooping on one knee and catching at his hand. “Dear master! Speak to me!”

The old man turned slowly towards him; and muttered in a hollow voice:

“This is another!—How many of these spirits there have been to-night!”

“No spirit, master. No one but your old servant. You know me now, I am sure? Miss Nell—where is she—where is she?”

“They all say that!” cried the old man. “They all ask the same question. A spirit!”

“Where is she?” demanded Kit. “Oh, tell me but that—but that, dear master!”



"She is asleep—yonder—in there."

"Thank God!"

"Ay! Thank God!" returned the old man. "I have prayed to Him many, and many, and many a livelong night, when she has been asleep, He knows. Hark! Did she call?"

"I heard no voice."

"You did. You hear her now. Do you tell me that you don't hear *that!*"

He started up, and listened again.

"Nor that?" he cried with a triumphant smile. "Can anybody know that voice so well as I? Hush! hush!"

Motioning to him to be silent, he stole away into another chamber. After a short absence (during which he could be heard to speak in a softened soothing tone) he returned, bearing in his hand a lamp.

"She is still asleep," he whispered. "You were right. She did not call—unless she did so in her slumber. She has called to me in her sleep before now, sir; as I have sat by watching, I have seen her lips move, and have known, though no sound came from them, that she spoke of me. I feared the light might dazzle her eyes and wake her, so I brought it here."

He spoke rather to himself than to the visitor, but, when he had put the lamp upon the table, he took it up, as if impelled by some momentary recollection or curiosity, and held it near his face. Then, as if forgetting his motive in the very action, he turned away, and put it down again.

"She is sleeping soundly," he said; "but no wonder. Angel hands have strewn the ground deep with snow, that the lightest footstep may be lighter yet; and the very birds are dead, that they may not wake her. She used to feed them, sir. Though never so cold and hungry, the timid things would fly from us. They never flew from her!"

Again he stopped to listen, and scarcely drawing breath, listened for a long, long time. That fancy past, he opened an old chest, took out some clothes as fondly as if they had been living things, and began to smooth and brush them with his hand.

"Why dost thou lie so idle there, dear Nell," he murmured, "when there are bright red berries out of doors waiting for thee to pluck them? Why dost thou lie so idle there, when thy little friends come creeping to the door, crying, 'Where is Nell—sweet Nell?'—and sob and weep because they do not see thee? She was always gentle with children. The wildest would do her bidding—she had a tender way with them, indeed she had!"

Kit had no power to speak. His eyes were filled with tears.

"Her little homely dress,—her favourite!" cried the old man, pressing it to his breast, and patting it with his shrivelled hand. "She will miss it when she wakes. They have hid it here in sport, but she shall have it—she shall have it. I would not vex my darling for the wide world's riches. See here—these shoes—how worn they are!—she kept them to remind her of our last long journey. You see where the little feet went bare upon the ground. They told me afterwards that the stones had cut and bruised them. *She* never told me that. No, no, God bless her! and, I have remembered since, she walked behind me, sir, that I might not see how lame she was—but yet she had my hand in hers, and seemed to lead me still."

He pressed them to his lips, and, having carefully put them back again, went on communing with himself—looking wistfully from time to time towards the chamber he had lately visited.

"She was not wont to be a lie-abed; but she was well then. We must have patience. When she is well again, she will rise early as she used to do, and ramble abroad in the healthy morning-time. I often tried to track the way she had gone, but her small footstep left no print upon the dewy ground to guide me.—Who is that? Shut the door. Quick! Have we not enough to do to drive away that marble cold, and keep her warm?"

The door was indeed opened for the entrance of Mr. Garland and his friend, accompanied by two other persons. These were the school-master and the bachelor. The former held a light in his hand. He had, it seemed, but gone to his own cottage to replenish the exhausted lamp, at the moment when Kit came up and found the old man alone.

He softened again at sight of these two friends, and, laying aside the angry manner—if to anything so feeble and so sad the term can be applied—in which he had spoken when the door opened, resumed his former seat, and subsided, by little and little, into the old action, and the old, dull, wandering sound.

Of the strangers he took no heed whatever. He had seen them, but appeared quite incapable of interest or curiosity. The younger brother stood apart. The bachelor drew a chair towards the old man, and sat down close beside him. After a long silence, he ventured to speak.

"Another night, and not in bed!" he said softly. "I hoped you would be more mindful of your promise to me. Why do you not take some rest?"

"Sleep has left me," returned the old man. "It is all with her!"

"It would pain her very much to know that you were watching thus," said the bachelor. "You would not give her pain?"

"I am not so sure of that, if it would only rouse her. She has slept so very long. And yet I am rash to say so. It is a good and happy sleep—eh?"

"Indeed it is," returned the bachelor. "Indeed, indeed it is!"

"That's well!—and the waking——" faltered the old man.

"Happy too. Happier than tongue can tell, or heart of man conceive."

They watched him as he rose and stole on tiptoe to the other chamber, where the lamp had been replaced. They listened as he spoke again within its silent walls. They looked into the faces of each other, and no man's cheek was free from tears. He came back, whispering that she was still asleep, but that he thought she had



"MASTER!" HE CRIED, STOOPING ON ONE KNEE AND CATCHING AT HIS HAND. "DEAR MASTER! SPEAK TO ME!"

moved. It was her hand, he said—a little—a very, very little—but he was pretty sure she had moved it—perhaps in seeking his. He had known her do that, before now, though in the deepest sleep the while. And, when he had said this, he dropped into his chair again, and, clasping his hands above his head, uttered a cry never to be forgotten.

The poor schoolmaster motioned to the bachelor that he would come on the other side, and speak to him. They gently unlocked his fingers, which he had twisted in his grey hair, and pressed them in their own.

"He will hear me," said the schoolmaster, "I am sure. He will hear either me or you if we beseech him. She would at all times."

"I will hear any voice she liked to hear," cried the old man. "I love all she loved!"

"I know you do," returned the schoolmaster. "I am certain of it. Think of her; think of all the sorrows and afflictions you have shared together; of all the trials, and all the peaceful pleasures, you have jointly known."

"I do. I do. I think of nothing else."

"I would have you think of nothing else to-night—of nothing but those things which will



soften your heart, dear friend, and open it to old affections and old times. It is so that she would speak to you herself, and in her name it is that I speak now."

"You do well to speak softly," said the old man. "We will not wake her. I should be glad to see her eyes again, and to see her smile. There is a smile upon her young face now, but it is fixed and changeless. I would have it come and go. That shall be in Heaven's good time. We will not wake her."

"Let us not talk of her in her sleep, but as she used to be when you were journeying together, far away—as she was at home, in the old house from which you fled together—as she was in the old cheerful time," said the schoolmaster.

"She was always cheerful—very cheerful," cried the old man, looking steadfastly at him. "There was ever something mild and quiet about her, I remember, from the first; but she was of a happy nature."

"We have heard you say," pursued the schoolmaster, "that in this, and in all goodness, she was like her mother. You can think of and remember her?"

He maintained his steadfast look, but gave no answer.

"Or even one before her," said the bachelor. "It is many years ago, and affliction makes the time longer, but you have not forgotten her whose death contributed to make this child so dear to you, even before you knew her worth or could read her heart? Say, that you could carry back your thoughts to very distant days—to the time of your early life—when, unlike this fair flower, you did not pass your youth alone. Say, that you could remember, long ago, another child who loved you dearly, you being but a child yourself. Say, that you had a brother, long forgotten, long unseen, long separated from you, who now, at last, in your utmost need came back to comfort and console you——"

"To be to you what you were once to him," cried the younger, falling on his knee before him; "to repay your old affection, brother dear, by constant care, solicitude, and love; to be, at your right hand, what he has never ceased to be when oceans rolled between us; to call to witness his unchanging truth and mindfulness of bygone days, whole years of desolation. Give me but one word of recognition, brother—and never—no, never, in the brightest moment of our youngest days, when, poor silly boys, we thought to pass our lives together—have we been half as dear and precious to each other as we shall be from this time hence!"

The old man looked from face to face, and his lips moved; but no sound came from them in reply.

"If we were knit together then," pursued the younger brother, "what will be the bond between us now! Our love and fellowship began in childhood, when life was all before us, and will be resumed when we have proved it, and are but children at the last. As many restless spirits, who have hunted fortune, fame, or pleasure through the world, retire in their decline to where they first drew breath, vainly seeking to be children once again before they die, so we, less fortunate than they in early life, but happier in its closing scenes, will set up our rest again among our boyish haunts, and going home with no hope realised, that had its growth in manhood—carrying back nothing that we brought away, but our old yearnings to each other—saving no fragment from the wreck of life, but that which first endeared it—may be indeed but children as at first. And even," he added in an altered voice, "even if what I dread to name has come to pass—even if that be so, or is to be (which Heaven forbid and spare us!)—still, dear brother, we are not apart, and have that comfort in our great affliction."

By little and little the old man had drawn back towards the inner chamber while these words were spoken. He pointed there, as he replied, with trembling lips:

"You plot among you to wean my heart from her. You never will do that—never while I have life. I have no relative or friend but her—I never had—I never will have. She is all in all to me. It is too late to part us now."

Waving them off with his hand, and calling softly to her as he went, he stole into the room. They who were left behind drew close together, and after a few whispered words—not unbroken by emotion, or easily uttered—followed him. They moved so gently, that their footsteps made no noise; but there were sobs from among the group, and sounds of grief and mourning.

For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favour. "When I die, put near me something that has loved the

light, and had the sky above it always." Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead. Her little bird—a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed—was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless for ever.

Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face; it had passed, like a dream, through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death.

The old man held one languid arm in his, and had the small hand tight folded to his breast for warmth. It was the hand she had stretched out to him with her last smile—the hand that had led him on through all their wanderings. Ever and anon he pressed it to his lips; then hugged it to his breast again, murmuring that it was warmer now; and, as he said it, he looked, in agony, to those who stood around, as if imploring them to help her.

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast—the garden she had tended—the eyes she had gladdened—the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour—the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday—could know her never more.

"It is not," said the schoolmaster as he bent down to kiss her on the cheek, and gave his tears free vent, "it is not on earth that Heaven's justice ends. Think what earth is, compared with the world to which her young spirit has winged its early flight; and say, if one deliberate wish expressed in solemn terms above this bed could call her back to life, which of us would utter it?"

## CHAPTER LXXII.

WHEN morning came, and they could speak more calmly on the subject of their grief, they heard how her life had closed.

She had been dead two days. They were all about her at the time, knowing that the end was drawing on. She died soon after daybreak. They had read and talked to her in the earlier portion of the night, but, as the hours crept on, she sunk to sleep. They could tell, by what she faintly uttered in her dreams, that they were of her journeyings with the old man; they were of no painful scenes, but of people who had helped and used them kindly, for she often said "God bless you!" with great fervour. Waking, she never wandered in her mind but once, and that was of beautiful music which she said was in the air. God knows. It may have been.

Opening her eyes at last from a very quiet sleep, she begged that they would kiss her once again. That done, she turned to the old man with a lovely smile upon her face—such, they said, as they had never seen, and never could forget—and clung with both her arms about his neck. They did not know that she was dead at first.

She had spoken very often of the two sisters, who, she said, were like dear friends to her. She wished they could be told how much she thought about them, and how she had watched them as they walked together by the river-side at night. She would like to see poor Kit, she had often said of late. She wished there was somebody to take her love to Kit. And, even then, she never thought or spoke about him but with something of her old, clear, merry laugh.

For the rest, she had never murmured or complained; but, with a quiet mind, and manner quite unaltered, save that she every day became more earnest and more grateful to them—faded like the light upon a summer's evening.

The child who had been her little friend came there, almost as soon as it was day, with an offering of dried flowers which he begged them to lay upon her breast. It was he who had come to the window overnight and spoken to the sexton, and they saw in the snow traces of small feet, where he had been lingering near the room in which she lay, before he went to bed. He had a fancy, it seemed, that they had left her there alone; and could not bear the thought.



He told them of his dream again, and that it was of her being restored to them, just as she used to be. He begged hard to see her, saying that he would be very quiet, and that they need not fear his being alarmed, for he had sat alone by his young brother all day long, when *he* was dead, and had felt glad to be so near him. They let him have his wish; and indeed he kept his word, and was, in his childish way, a lesson to them all.

Up to that time, the old man had not spoken once—except to her—or stirred from the bedside. But, when he saw her little favourite, he was moved as they had not seen him yet, and made as though he would have him come nearer. Then, pointing to the bed, he burst into tears for the first time, and they who stood by, knowing that the sight of this child had done him good, left them alone together.

Soothing him with his artless talk of her, the child persuaded him to take some rest, to walk abroad, to do almost as he desired him. And when the day came on, which must remove her in her earthly shape from earthly eyes for ever, he led him away, that he might not know when she was taken from him.

They were to gather fresh leaves and berries for her bed. It was Sunday—a bright, clear, wintry afternoon—and, as they traversed the village street, those who were walking in their path drew back to make way for them, and gave them a softened greeting. Some shook the old man kindly by the hand, some stood uncovered while he tottered by, and many cried “God help him!” as he passed along.

“Neighbour!” said the old man, stopping at the cottage where his young guide’s mother dwelt, “how is it that the folks are nearly all in black to-day? I have seen a mourning ribbon or a piece of crape on almost every one.”

She could not tell, the woman said.

“Why, you yourself—you wear the colour too!” he said. “Windows are closed that never used to be by day. What does this mean?”

Again the woman said she could not tell.

“We must go back,” said the old man hurriedly. “We must see what this is.”

“No, no,” cried the child, detaining him. “Remember what you promised. Our way is to the old green lane, where she and I so often were, and where you found us, more than once, making those gailands for her garden. Do not turn back!”

“Where is she now?” said the old man. “Tell me that.”

“Do you not know?” returned the child. “Did we not leave her but just now?”

“True. True. It *was* her we left—was it?”

He pressed his hand upon his brow, looked vacantly round, and, as if impelled by a sudden thought, crossed the road, and entered the sexton’s house. He and his deaf assistant were sitting before the fire. Both rose up on seeing who it was.

The child made a hasty sign to them with his hand. It was the action of an instant, but that, and the old man’s look, were quite enough.

“Do you—do you bury any one to-day?” he said eagerly.

“No, no! Who should we bury, sir?” returned the sexton.

“Ay, who indeed? I say with you, who indeed?”

“It is a holiday with us, good sir,” returned the sexton mildly. “We have no work to do to-day.”

“Why, then, I’ll go where you will,” said the old man, turning to the child. “You’re sure of what you tell me? You would not deceive me? I am changed, even in the little time since you last saw me.”

“Go thy ways with him, sir,” cried the sexton, “and Heaven be with ye both!”

“I am quite ready,” said the old man meekly. “Come, boy, come,” and so submitted to be led away.

And now the bell—the bell she had so often heard by night and day, and listened to with solemn pleasure almost as a living voice—rung its remorseless toll for her, so young, so beautiful, so good. Decrepit age, and vigorous life, and blooming youth, and helpless infancy poured forth—on crutches, in the pride of strength and health, in the full blush of promise, in the mere dawn of life—to gather round her tomb. Old men were there, whose eyes were dim and senses failing—grandmothers, who might have died ten years ago, and still been old—the deaf, the blind, the lame, the palsied, the living dead in many shapes and forms, to see the closing of that early grave. What was the death it would shut in, to that which still could crawl and creep above it?

Along the crowded path they bore her now; pure as the newly-fallen snow that covered it; whose day on earth had been as fleeting. Under the porch, where she had sat when Heaven in its mercy brought her to that peaceful spot, she passed again; and the old church received her in its quiet shade.

They carried her to one old nook, where she had many and many a time sat musing, and laid their burden softly on the pavement. The light streamed on it through the coloured window—a window where the boughs of trees were ever rustling in the summer, and where the birds sang sweetly all day long. With every breath of air that stirred among those branches in the sunshine, some trembling, changing light would fall upon her grave.

Earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust ! Many a young hand dropped in its little wreath, many a stifled sob was heard. Some—and they were not a few—knelt down. All were sincere and truthful in their sorrow.

The service done, the mourners stood apart, and the villagers closed round to look into the grave before the pavement stone should be replaced. One called to mind how he had seen her sitting on that very spot, and how her book had fallen on her lap, and she was gazing with a pensive face upon the sky. Another told how he had wondered much that one so delicate as she should be so bold ; how she had never feared to enter the church alone at night, but had loved to linger there when all was quiet, and even to climb the tower stair, with no more light than that of the moon rays stealing through the loopholes in the thick old wall. A whisper went about among the oldest, that she had seen and talked with angels ; and when they called to mind how she had looked and spoken, and her early death, some thought it might be so indeed. Thus, coming to the grave in little knots, and glancing down, and giving place to others, and falling off in whispering groups of three or four, the church was cleared, in time, of all but the sexton and the mourning friends.

They saw the vault covered, and the stone fixed down. Then, when the dusk of evening had come on, and not a sound disturbed the sacred stillness of the place—when the bright moon poured in her light on tomb and monument, on pillar, wall, and arch, and most of all (it seemed to them) upon her quiet grave—in that calm time, when outward things and inward thoughts teem with assurances of immortality, and worldly hopes and fears are humbled in the dust before them—then, with tranquil and submissive hearts, they turned away, and left the child with God.

Oh ! it is hard to take to heart the lesson that such deaths will teach ; but let no man reject it, for it is one that all must learn, and is a mighty, universal Truth. When Death strikes down the innocent and young, for every fragile form from which he lets the panting spirit free, a hundred

virtues rise, in shapes of mercy, charity, and love, to walk the world, and bless it. Of every tear that sorrowing mortals shed on such green graves, some good is born, some gentler nature comes. In the Destroyer's steps there spring up bright creations that defy his power, and his dark path becomes a way of light to Heaven.

It was late when the old man came home. The boy had led him to his own dwelling, under some pretence, on their way back ; and, rendered drowsy by his long ramble and late want of rest, he had sunk into a deep sleep by the fireside. He was perfectly exhausted, and they were careful not to rouse him. The slumber held him a long time, and, when he at length awoke, the moon was shining.

The younger brother, uneasy at his protracted absence, was watching at the door for his coming, when he appeared in the pathway with his little guide. He advanced to meet them, and tenderly obliging the old man to lean upon his arm, conducted him with slow and trembling steps towards the house.

He repaired to her chamber straight. Not finding what he had left there, he returned with distracted looks to the room in which they were assembled. From that, he rushed into the schoolmaster's cottage, calling her name. They followed close upon him, and, when he had vainly searched it, brought him home.

With such persuasive words as pity and affection could suggest, they prevailed upon him to sit among them and hear what they should tell him. Then, endeavouring by every little artifice to prepare his mind for what must come, and dwelling with many fervent words upon the happy lot to which she had been removed, they told him, at last, the truth. The moment it had passed their lips, he fell down among them like a murdered man.

For many hours they had little hope of his surviving ; but grief is strong, and he recovered.

If there be any who have never known the blank that follows death—the weary void—the sense of desolation that will come upon the strongest minds, when something familiar and beloved is missed at every turn—the connection between inanimate and senseless things, and the object of recollection, when every household god becomes a monument, and every room a grave—if there be any who have not known this, and proved it by their own experience, they can never faintly guess how, for many days, the old man pined and moped away the time, and wandered here and there as seeking something, and had no comfort.



Whatever power of thought or memory he retained was all bound up in her. He never understood, or seemed to care to understand, about his brother. To every endearment and attention he continued listless. If they spoke to him on this or any other theme—save one—he would hear them patiently for awhile, then turn away, and go on seeking as before.

On that one theme, which was in his and all their minds, it was impossible to touch. Dead! He could not hear or bear the word. The slightest hint of it would throw him into a paroxysm, like that he had had when it was first spoken. In what hope he lived, no man could tell; but that he had some hope of finding her again—some faint and shadowy hope, deferred from day to day, and making him from day to day more sick and sore at heart—was plain to all.

They bethought them of a removal from the scene of this last sorrow; of trying whether change of place would rouse or cheer him. His brother sought the advice of those who were accounted skilful in such matters, and they came and saw him. Some of the number stayed upon the spot, conversed with him when he would converse, and watched him as he wandered up and down, alone and silent. Move him where they might, they said, he would ever seek to get back there. His mind would run upon that spot. If they confined him closely, and kept a strict guard upon him, they might hold him prisoner, but, if he could by any means escape, he would surely wander back to that place, or die upon the road.

The boy to whom he had submitted at first, had no longer any influence with him. At times he would suffer the child to walk by his side, or would even take such notice of his presence as giving him his hand, or would stop to kiss his cheek, or pat him on the head. At other times he would entreat him—not unkindly—to be gone, and would not brook him near. But, whether alone, or with this pliant friend, or with those who would have given him, at any cost or sacrifice, some consolation or some peace of mind, if happily the means could have been devised, he was at all times the same—with no love or care for anything in life—a broken-hearted man.

At length, they found, one day, that he had risen early, and, with his knapsack on his back, his staff in hand, her own straw hat, and little basket full of such things as she had been used to carry, was gone. As they were making ready to pursue him far and wide, a frightened school-boy came who had seen him, but a moment before, sitting in the church—upon her grave, he said.

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They hastened there, and, going softly to the door, espied him in the attitude of one who waited patiently. They did not disturb him then, but kept a watch upon him all that day. When it grew quite dark, he rose and returned home, and went to bed, murmuring to himself, "She will come to-morrow!"

Upon the morrow he was there again from sunrise until night; and still at night he laid him down to rest, and murmured, "She will come to-morrow!"

And thenceforth, every day, and all day long, he waited at her grave for her. How many pictures of new journeys over pleasant country, of resting-places under the free broad sky, of rambles in the fields and woods, and paths not often trodden—how many tones of that one well-remembered voice—how many glimpses of the form, the fluttering dress, the hair that waved so gaily in the wind—how many visions of what had been, and what he hoped was yet to be—rose up before him, in the old, dull, silent church! He never told them what he thought, or where he went. He would sit with them at night, pondering with a secret satisfaction, they could see, upon the flight that he and she would take before night came again; and still they would hear him whisper in his prayers, "Lord! Let her come to-morrow!"

The last time was on a genial day in spring. He did not return at the usual hour, and they went to seek him. He was lying dead upon the stone.

They laid him by the side of her whom he had loved so well; and, in the church where they had often prayed, and mused, and lingered hand-in-hand, the child and the old man slept together.

## CHAPTER THE LAST.

**T**HE magic reel, which, rolling on before, has led the chronicler thus far, now slackens in its pace, and stops. It lies before the goal; the pursuit is at an end.

It remains but to dismiss the leaders of the little crowd who have borne us company upon the road, and so to close the journey.

Foremost among them, smooth Sampson Brass and Sally, arm-in-arm, claim our polite attention.

Mr. Sampson, then, being detained, as already has been shown, by the justice upon whom he called, and being so strongly pressed to protract

his stay that he could by no means refuse, remained under his protection for a considerable time, during which the great attention of his entertainer kept him so extremely close, that he was quite lost to society, and never even went abroad for exercise saving into a small paved yard. So well, indeed, was his modest and retiring temper understood by those with whom he had to deal, and so jealous were they of his absence, that they required a kind of friendly bond to be entered into by two substantial housekeepers, in the sum of fifteen hundred pounds apiece, before they would suffer him to quit their hospitable roof—doubting, it appeared, that he would return, if once let loose, on any other terms. Mr. Brass, struck with the humour of this jest, and carrying out its spirit to the utmost, sought from his wide connection a pair of friends whose joint possessions fell some halfpence short of fifteenpence, and proffered them as bail—for that was the merry word agreed upon on both sides. These gentlemen being rejected after twenty-four hours' pleasantry, Mr. Brass consented to remain, and did remain, until a club of choice spirits called a Grand Jury (who were in the joke) summoned him to a trial before twelve other wags for perjury and fraud, who in their turn found him guilty with a most facetious joy—nay, the very populace entered into the whim, and, when Mr. Brass was moving in a hackney coach towards the building where these wags assembled, saluted him with rotten eggs and carcasses of kittens, and feigned to wish to tear him into shreds, which greatly increased the comicality of the thing, and made him relish it the more, no doubt.

To work this sportive vein still further, Mr. Brass, by his counsel, moved in arrest of judgment that he had been led to criminate himself, by assurances of safety and promises of pardon, and claimed the leniency which the law extends to such confiding natures as are thus deluded. After solemn argument, this point (with others of a technical nature, whose humorous extravagance it would be difficult to exaggerate) was referred to the judges for their decision, Sampson being meantime removed to his former quarters. Finally, some of the points were given in Sampson's favour, and some against him; and the upshot was, that, instead of being desired to travel for a time in foreign parts, he was permitted to grace the mother country under certain insignificant restrictions.

These were, that he should, for a term of years, reside in a spacious mansion where several other gentlemen were lodged and boarded

at the public charge, who went clad in a sober uniform of grey turned up with yellow, had their hair cut extremely short, and chiefly lived on gruel and light soup. It was also required of him that he should partake of their exercise of constantly ascending an endless flight of stairs; and, lest his legs, unused to such exertion, should be weakened by it, that he should wear upon one ankle an amulet or charm of iron. These conditions being arranged, he was removed one evening to his new abode, and enjoyed, in common with nine other gentlemen and two ladies, the privilege of being taken to his place of retirement in one of Royalty's own carriages.

Over and above these trifling penalties, his name was erased and blotted out from the roll of attorneys; which erasure has been always held in these latter times to be a great degradation and reproach, and to imply the commission of some amazing villainy—as indeed would seem to be the case, when so many worthless names remain among its better records unmolested.

Of Sally Brass conflicting rumours went abroad. Some said with confidence that she had gone down to the docks in male attire, and had become a female sailor; others darkly whispered that she had enlisted as a private in the second regiment of Foot Guards, and had been seen in uniform, and on duty, to wit, leaning on her musket and looking out of a sentry-box in St. James's Park, one evening. There were many such whispers as these in circulation; but the truth appears to be that, after a lapse of some five years (during which there is no direct evidence of her having been seen at all), two wretched people were more than once observed to crawl at dusk from the inmost recesses of St. Giles's, and to take their way along the streets, with shuffling steps and cowering shivering forms, looking into the roads and kennels as they went in search of refuse food or disregarded offal. These forms were never beheld but in those nights of cold and gloom, when the terrible spectres, who lie at all other times in the obscene hiding-places of London, in archways, dark vaults, and cellars, venture to creep into the streets; the embodied spirits of Disease, and Vice, and Famine. It was whispered, by those who should have known, that these were Sampson and his sister Sally; and to this day, it is said, they sometimes pass, on bad nights, in the same loathsome guise, close at the elbow of the shrinking passenger.

The body of Quilp being found—though not



until some days had elapsed—an inquest was held on it near the spot where it had been washed ashore. The general supposition was that he had committed suicide, and, this appearing to be favoured by all the circumstances of his death, the verdict was to that effect. He was left to be buried with a stake through his heart in the centre of four lonely roads.

It was rumoured afterwards that this horrible and barbarous ceremony had been dispensed with, and that the remains had been secretly given up to Tom Scott. But even here opinion was divided; for some said Tom had dug them up at midnight, and carried them to a place indicated to him by the widow. It is probable that both these stories may have had their origin in the simple fact of Tom's shedding tears upon the inquest—which he certainly did, extraordinary as it may appear. He manifested, besides, a strong desire to assault the jury; and, being restrained and conducted out of court, darkened its only window by standing on his head upon the sill, until he was dexterously tilted upon his feet again by a cautious beadle.

Being cast upon the world by his master's death, he determined to go through it upon his head and hands, and accordingly began to tumble for his bread. Finding, however, his English birth an insurmountable obstacle to his advancement in this pursuit (notwithstanding that his art was in high repute and favour), he assumed the name of an Italian image lad with whom he had become acquainted; and afterwards tumbled with extraordinary success, and to overflowing audiences.

Little Mrs. Quilp never quite forgave herself the one deceit that lay so heavy on her conscience, and never spoke or thought of it but with bitter tears. Her husband had no relations, and she was rich. He had made no will, or she would probably have been poor. Having married the first time at her mother's instigation, she consulted in her second choice nobody but herself. It fell upon a smart young fellow enough; and, as he made it a preliminary condition that Mrs. Jiniwin should be thenceforth an out-pensioner, they lived together after marriage with no more than the average amount of quarrelling, and led a merry life upon the dead dwarf's money.

Mr. and Mrs. Garland, and Mr. Abel, went out as usual (except that there was a change in their household, as will be seen presently), and in due time the latter went into partnership with his friend the notary, on which occasion there was a dinner, and a ball, and great extent of dissipation. Unto this ball there happened

to be invited the most bashful young lady that was ever seen, with whom Mr. Abel happened to fall in love. *How* it happened, or how they found it out, or which of them first communicated the discovery to the other, nobody knows. But, certain it is that in course of time they were married; and equally certain it is that they were the happiest of the happy; and no less certain it is that they deserved to be so. And it is pleasant to write down that they reared a family; because any propagation of goodness and benevolence is no small addition to the aristocracy of nature, and no small subject of rejoicing for mankind at large.

The pony preserved his character for independence and principle down to the last moment of his life; which was an unusually long one, and caused him to be looked upon, indeed, as the very Old Parr of ponies. He often went to and fro with the little phaeton between Mr. Garland's and his son's, and, as the old people and the young were frequently together, had a stable of his own at the new establishment, into which he would walk of himself with surprising dignity. He condescended to play with the children as they grew old enough to cultivate his friendship, and would run up and down the little paddock with them like a dog; but though he relaxed so far, and allowed them such small freedoms as caresses, or even to look at his shoes or hang on by his tail, he never permitted any one among them to mount his back or drive him; thus showing that even their familiarity must have its limits, and that there were points between them far too serious for trifling.

He was not unsusceptible of warm attachments in his later life; for, when the good bachelor came to live with Mr. Garland upon the clergyman's decease, he conceived a great friendship for him, and amiably submitted to be driven by his hands without the least resistance. He did no work for two or three years before he died, but lived in clover; and his last act (like a choleric old gentleman) was to kick his doctor.

Mr. Swiveller, recovering very slowly from his illness, and entering into the receipt of his annuity, bought for the Marchioness a handsome stock of clothes, and put her to school forthwith, in redemption of the vow he had made upon his fevered bed. After casting about for some time for a name which should be worthy of her, he decided in favour of Sophronia Sphynx, as being euphonious and genteel, and furthermore indicative of mystery. Under this title the Marchioness repaired, in tears, to the school of his selection, from which, as she soon distanced all

competitors, she was removed before the lapse of many quarters to one of a higher grade. It is but bare justice to Mr. Swiveller to say that, although the expenses of her education kept him in straitened circumstances for half-a-dozen years, he never slackened in his zeal, and always

held himself sufficiently repaid by the accounts he heard (with great gravity) of her advancement, on his monthly visits to the governess, who looked upon him as a literary gentleman of eccentric habits, and of a most prodigious talent in quotation.



“TWO WRETCHED PEOPLE WERE MORE THAN ONCE OBSERVED TO CRAWL AT DUSK FROM THE INMOST RECESSES OF ST. GILES’S.”

In a word, Mr. Swiveller kept the Marchioness at this establishment until she was, at a moderate guess, full nineteen years of age—good-looking, clever, and good-humoured; when he began to consider seriously what was to be done next. On one of his periodical visits, while he was

revolving this question in his mind, the Marchioness came down to him alone, looking more smiling and more fresh than ever. Then, it occurred to him, but not for the first time, that if she would marry him, how comfortable they might be! So Richard asked her. Whatever



she said, it wasn't No; and they were married in good earnest that day week, which gave Mr. Swiveller frequent occasion to remark, at divers subsequent periods, that there had been a young lady saving up for him after all.

A little cottage at Hampstead being to let, which had in its garden a smoking-box, the envy of the civilised world, they agreed to become its tenants; and, when the honeymoon was over, entered upon its occupation. To this retreat Mr. Chuckster repaired regularly every Sunday to spend the day—usually beginning with breakfast—and here he was the great purveyor of general news and fashionable intelligence. For some years he continued a deadly foe to Kit, protesting that he had a better opinion of him when he was supposed to have stolen the five-pound note than when he was shown to be perfectly free of the crime; inasmuch as his guilt would have had in it something daring and bold, whereas his innocence was but another proof of a sneaking and crafty disposition. By slow degrees, however, he was reconciled to him in the end; and even went so far as to honour him with his patronage, as one who had in some measure reformed, and was therefore to be forgiven. But he never forgot or pardoned that circumstance of the shilling; holding that if he had come back to get another he would have done well enough, but that his returning to work out the former gift was a stain upon his moral character which no penitence or contrition could ever wash away.

Mr. Swiveller, having always been in some measure of a philosophic and reflective turn, grew immensely contemplative, at times, in the smoking-box, and was accustomed at such periods to debate in his own mind the mysterious question of Sophronia's parentage. Sophronia herself supposed she was an orphan; but Mr. Swiveller, putting various slight circumstances together, often thought Miss Brass must know better than that; and having heard from his wife of her strange interview with Quilp, entertained sundry misgivings whether that person, in his lifetime, might not also have been able to solve the riddle, had he chosen. These speculations, however, gave him no uneasiness; for Sophronia was ever a most cheerful, affectionate, and provident wife to him; and Dick (excepting for an occasional outbreak with Mr. Chuckster, which she had the good sense rather to encourage than oppose) was to her an attached and domesticated husband. And they played many hundred thousand games of cribbage together. And let it be added to Dick's honour, that though we have called her Sophronia, he called her the

Marchioness from first to last; and that, upon every anniversary of the day on which he found her in his sick-room, Mr. Chuckster came to dinner, and there was great glorification.

The gamblers, Isaac List and Jowl, with their trusty confederate, Mr. James Groves of unimpeachable memory, pursued their course with varying success, until the failure of a spirited enterprise in the way of their profession dispersed them in different directions, and caused their career to receive a sudden check from the long and strong arm of the law. This defeat had its origin in the untoward detection of a new associate—young Frederick Trent—who thus became the unconscious instrument of their punishment and his own.

For the young man himself, he rioted abroad for a brief term, living by his wits—which means by the abuse of every faculty that worthily employed raises man above the beasts, and, so degraded, sinks him far below them. It was not long before his body was recognised by a stranger, who chanced to visit that hospital in Paris where the drowned are laid out to be owned, despite the bruises and disfigurements which were said to have been occasioned by some previous scuffle. But the stranger kept his own counsel until he returned home, and it was never claimed or cared for.

The young brother, or the single gentleman,—for that designation is more familiar,—would have drawn the poor schoolmaster from his lone retreat, and made him his companion and friend. But the humble village teacher was timid of venturing into the noisy world, and had become fond of his dwelling in the old churchyard. Calmly happy in his school, and in the spot, and in the attachment of Her little mourner, he pursued his quiet course in peace; and was, through the righteous gratitude of his friend—let this brief mention suffice for that—a *poor* schoolmaster no more.

That friend—single gentleman, or younger brother, which you will—had at his heart a heavy sorrow; but it bred in him no misanthropy or monastic gloom. He went forth into the world, a lover of his kind. For a long, long time it was his chief delight to travel in the steps of the old man and the child (so far as he could trace them from her last narrative), to halt where they had halted, sympathise where they had suffered, and rejoice where they had been made glad. Those who had been kind to them did not escape his search. The sisters at the school—they who were her friends, because themselves so friendless—Mrs. Jarley of the wax-work, Codlin, Short—he found them all; and,

trust me, the man who fed the furnace fire was not forgotten.

Kit's story, having got abroad, raised him up a host of friends, and many offers of provision for his future life. He had no idea, at first, of ever quitting Mr. Garland's service; but, after serious remonstrance and advice from that gentleman, began to contemplate the possibility of such a change being brought about in time. A good post was procured for him, with a rapidity which took away his breath, by some of the gentlemen who had believed him guilty of the offence laid to his charge, and who had acted upon that belief. Through the same kind agency, his mother was secured from want, and made quite happy. Thus, as Kit often said, his great misfortune turned out to be the source of all his subsequent prosperity.

Did Kit live a single man all his days, or did he marry? Of course he married, and who should be his wife but Barbara? And the best of it was, he married so soon that little Jacob was an uncle before the calves of his legs, already mentioned in this history, had ever been encased in broadcloth pantaloons,—though that was not quite the best either, for of necessity the baby was an uncle too. The delight of Kit's mother and of Barbara's mother upon the great occasion is past all telling. Finding they agreed so well on that, and on all other subjects, they took up their abode together, and were a most harmonious pair of friends from that time forth. And hadn't Astley's cause to bless itself for their all going together once a quarter—to the pit—and didn't Kit's mother always say, when they painted the outside, that Kit's last treat had helped to that, and wonder what the manager would feel if he but knew it as they passed his house.

When Kit had children six and seven years old, there was a Barbara among them, and a pretty Barbara she was. Nor was there wanting an exact fac-simile and copy of little Jacob as he appeared in those remote times, when they taught him what oysters meant. Of course there was an Abel, own godson to the Mr. Garland of that name; and there was a Dick, whom Mr. Swiveller did especially favour. The little group would often gather round him of a night, and beg him to tell again that story of good Miss Nell who died. This Kit would do; and when they cried to hear it, wishing it longer too, he would teach them how she had gone to Heaven, as all good people did; and how, if they were good like her, they might hope to be there too, one day, and to see and know her as he had done when he was quite a boy. Then he would relate to them how needy he used to be, and how she had taught him what he was otherwise too poor to learn, and how the old man had been used to say, "She always laughs at Kit;" at which they would brush away their tears, and laugh themselves to think that she had done so, and be again quite merry.

He sometimes took them to the street where she had lived; but new improvements had altered it so much, it was not like the same. The old house had been long ago pulled down, and a fine broad road was in its place. At first, he would draw with his stick a square upon the ground to show them where it used to stand. But, he soon became uncertain of the spot, and could only say it was thereabouts, he thought, and that these alterations were confusing.

Such are the changes which a few years bring about, and so do things pass away, like a tale that is told!

THE END.















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